

JAMMU

SHRINES & PILGRIMAGES



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The Author

Shri Janki Nath Ganhar is a prominent writer and journalist of Kashmir. Born October, 1916, he rounded off a brilliant academic career with a Master's degree in English Language & Literature. For his all-round excellence, he was awarded three coveted medals; Lord Lansdowne's Silver Medal for the All-Round-Best Boy (in C.M.S. High School, Srinagar); Lord Hardinge's Gold Medal for standing First in B.A.; and Lord Cheimsford's Gold Medal for the All-Round-Best Graduate (in S.P. College, Srinagar).

Soon after the completion of his studies, Shri Ganhar joined Jammu & Kashmir Government service where he rose to be Director of News, Radio Kashmir. Later he went over to the Government of India and held a number of important posts in different Media Units of Information & Broadcasting Ministry.

Shri Ganhar has a number of publications to his credit. These include "Buddhism in Kashmir & Ladakh", which, written in collaboration with his younger brother, has been acclaimed by Buddhist scholars all over the world.

Shri Ganhar, who earlier edited the Kashmir Government monthly, *Jammu & Kashmir Information*, now runs Kashmir's foremost English weekly, *Kashmir Herald*.

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SHRINES AND PILGRIMAGES

by
J. N. GANHAR M. A.

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To
the memory of
my revered parents
Pt. Gobind Joo Ganhar & Smt. Kunga Mali.

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PREFACE

The true purpose of religion is to realise the divinity in man, or, in other words, self-realisation. Visits to shrines and places of pilgrimage have always been considered a powerful aid towards this end.

In olden days, pilgrimages involved great hardships and discomfort. All the same, they were undertaken because they were believed to confer religious merit and rid one of his sins of commission and omission. Today, however, pilgrimages are no longer difficult and dangerous; nor do they take long to accomplish. There is therefore a great spurt in the number of people making pilgrimages.

Jammu is a land of shrines and pilgrimages. They are numerous and varied, and belong to various faiths. There is hardly a village or town which does not have a shrine of its own. And many of them are of more than local importance. But so far there is no book which gives an account of even the more important ones among them.

An attempt has been made in this book to fill up this deficiency. But it is not the intention to present all of them here. Included in it are only those which enjoy high sanctity or have something distinctive or peculiar about them. Inevitably greater attention has been paid to the more important ones like Vaishno Devi, Sarthal and Sukral, Sudh Mahadev and Kailash, Shahdara Sharif and Asrari-Sharif. Also included in it are accounts of popular heroes like Bawa Jitoo and Bua Bagan and the fairs and festivals peculiar to the province.

Jammu lies between the outer hills bounding the Valley of Kashmir and the plains of the Punjab. Its people, Dogras, have distinguished themselves in many a theatre of war. They have added a glorious chapter to India's military history by pushing the country's frontiers many thousands of miles farther north to the very confines of Central Asia and Tibet.

The Dogras are deeply devoted to their land and especially their places of worship, around which they have woven a variegated tapestry of myth and legend. This rich folklore has been given at

some length, as also their achievements in artistic expression which only religion can inspire.

Compared to Kashmir, Jammu has been comparatively unknown. But there are also here places which rival Kashmir in scenic splendour and salubrity of climate. And these are the places where the people have chosen the abode of their many gods and goddesses. So the book has interest not only for the religious devotee but also for the not-so-religious individual out for rest, relaxation and pleasure.

It has been my privilege to visit a large number of these shrines; so their accounts are mostly first-hand. Information about the rest has been provided by a number of kind friends. To them all my sincere thanks !

I am deeply beholden to Dr. Karan Singh, Cabinet Minister in the Government of India, who despite his many preoccupations, has contributed a *Foreword*. My thanks are also due to Shri Abdul Gani Goni, Speaker: Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Shri G.D. Sharma, Secretary, Dharmarth Trust, Shri Abdul Qudus Rasa Javidani, eminent poet of Bhadrawah, Kh. Ghulam Rasool Kamgar of Kishtwar, Hakim Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din, Special Auqaf Officer, Prof. U.C. Thakur, Bhadrawah, Prof. K.L. Bhalla and Dr. Aslam of Poonch, Shri R.N. Magazine, Shri Moti Lal Dhar, Shri R.S. Goel, Shri Kahn Chand Sharma, and to Shri Bansi Lal Gupta (of Udhampur).

Most of the photographs in the book have been provided by the State Information Department and for these I am beholden to Shri K.D. Uppal, Assistant Director and his staff. Most of the other photographs have kindly been provided by the Archaeological Survey of India and a few each by friends like Shri K.S. Gautam, Shri S.A.M. Jafri and Bakshi Hari Krishen.

Before bringing this labour of love and devotion to a close I must also record my appreciation of the unstinted cooperation and assistance of my cousin Rattan Lal Kachru; my nephew, Jawahar Lal Koul and my son, Ashok.

Last but not least, I must acknowledge my gratitude to my wife who despite her fragile constitution and weak health, has proved to be a tower of strength in this pilgrimage of mine and to my brother, *Babuji*, who has been the inspiration for it.

New Delhi.

Author



सत्यमेव जयते

पर्यटन तथा नागर विमानन मंत्री
MINISTER OF TOURISM &
CIVIL AVIATION

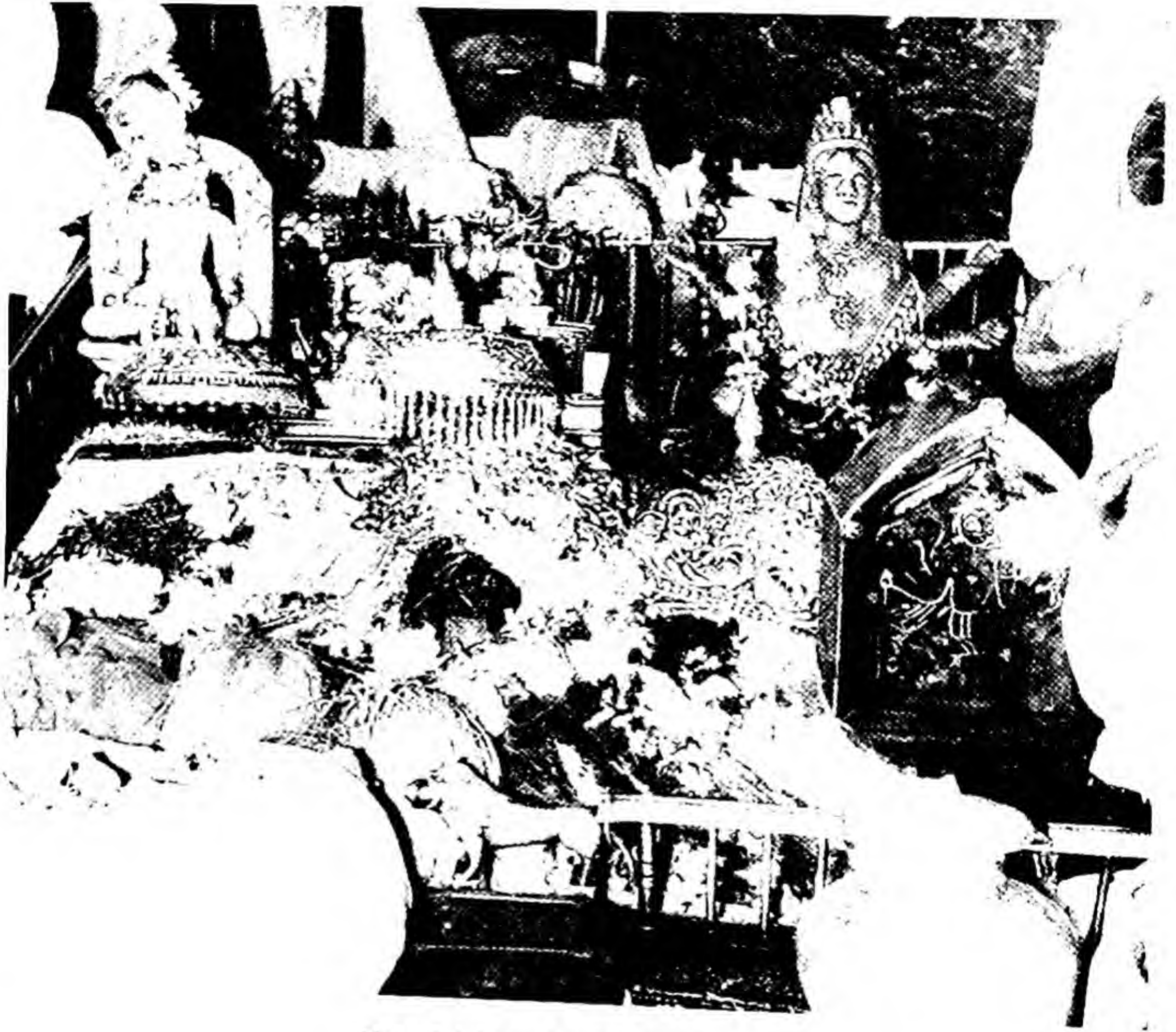
FOREWORD

Ever since the beginnings of Indian history at the very dawn of civilization, shrines and centres of worship have played a vital role in the life of our people. Both as a focus of community life and as a great force in national integration, these shrines remain to this day centres of devotion and dedication for millions. Shri J.N. Ganhar has performed a valuable service by collating a wealth of material regarding shrines and pilgrimages in the Jammu region. These include some very ancient shrines dedicated to the Goddess in varied manifestations, of which the famous cave shrine of Vaishno Devi is by far the best known. Shri Ganhar has not only given extensive information regarding the various Hindu shrines in Jammu, but has also included descriptions of Sikh, Christian and Muslim places of worship.

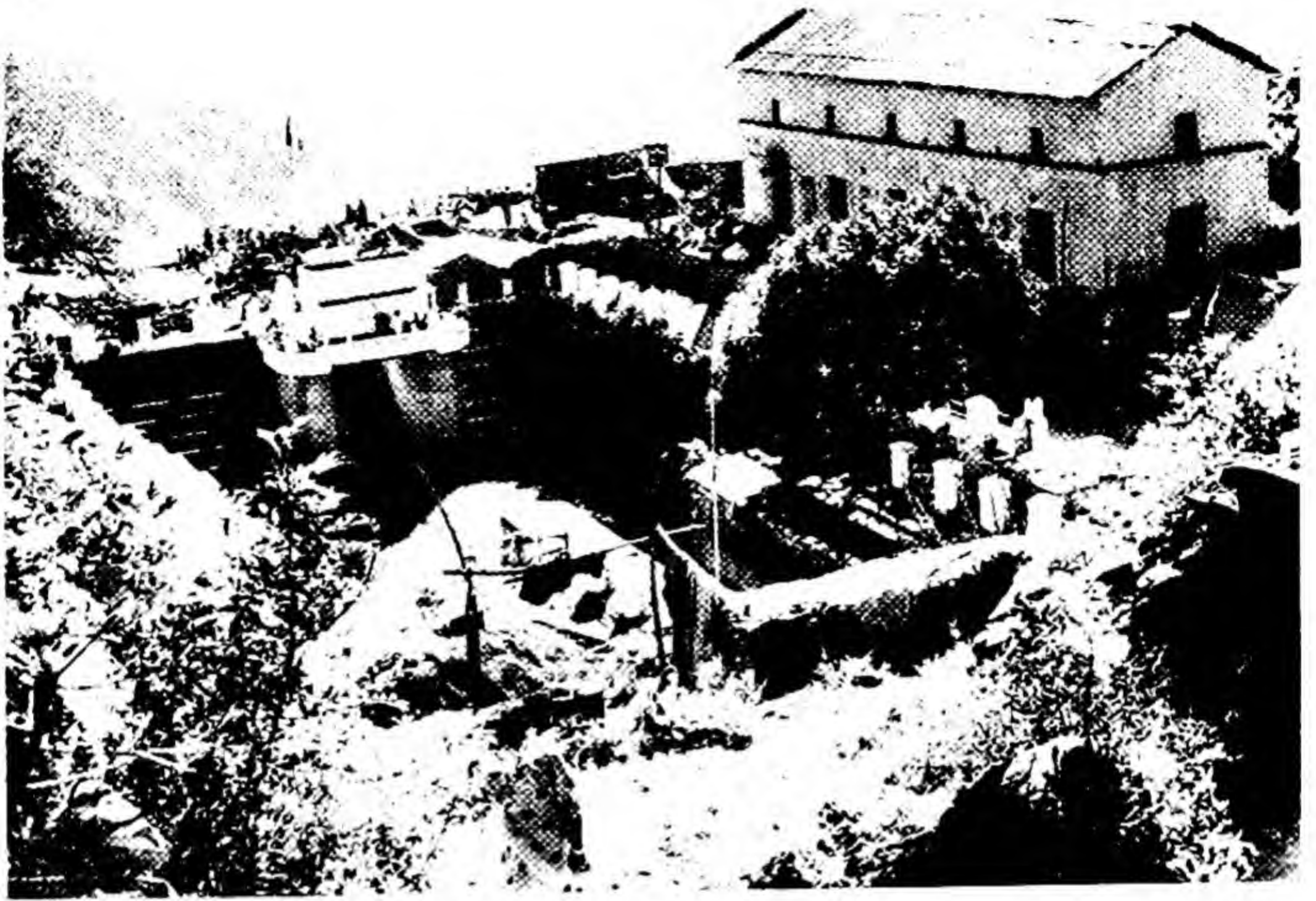
The Jammu region abounds in beautiful natural scenery and a large number of shrines which testify to the deep devotional spirit of the people residing in this area. An increasing stream of pilgrims from all over the country and even abroad are visiting these shrines, and tourists are also coming to Jammu in larger numbers not only as the gateway to Kashmir but as a tourism destination in its own right. Jammu & Kashmir has always been a glowing example of secularism and inter-religion harmony, and I hope Shri Ganhar will follow up this valuable book with a similarly detailed treatment of the numerous Hindu, Muslim and Sikh shrines in the Kashmir valley.

New Delhi:
May 1, 1973.

Taran Singh



Holy Trinity: Vaishno Devi.



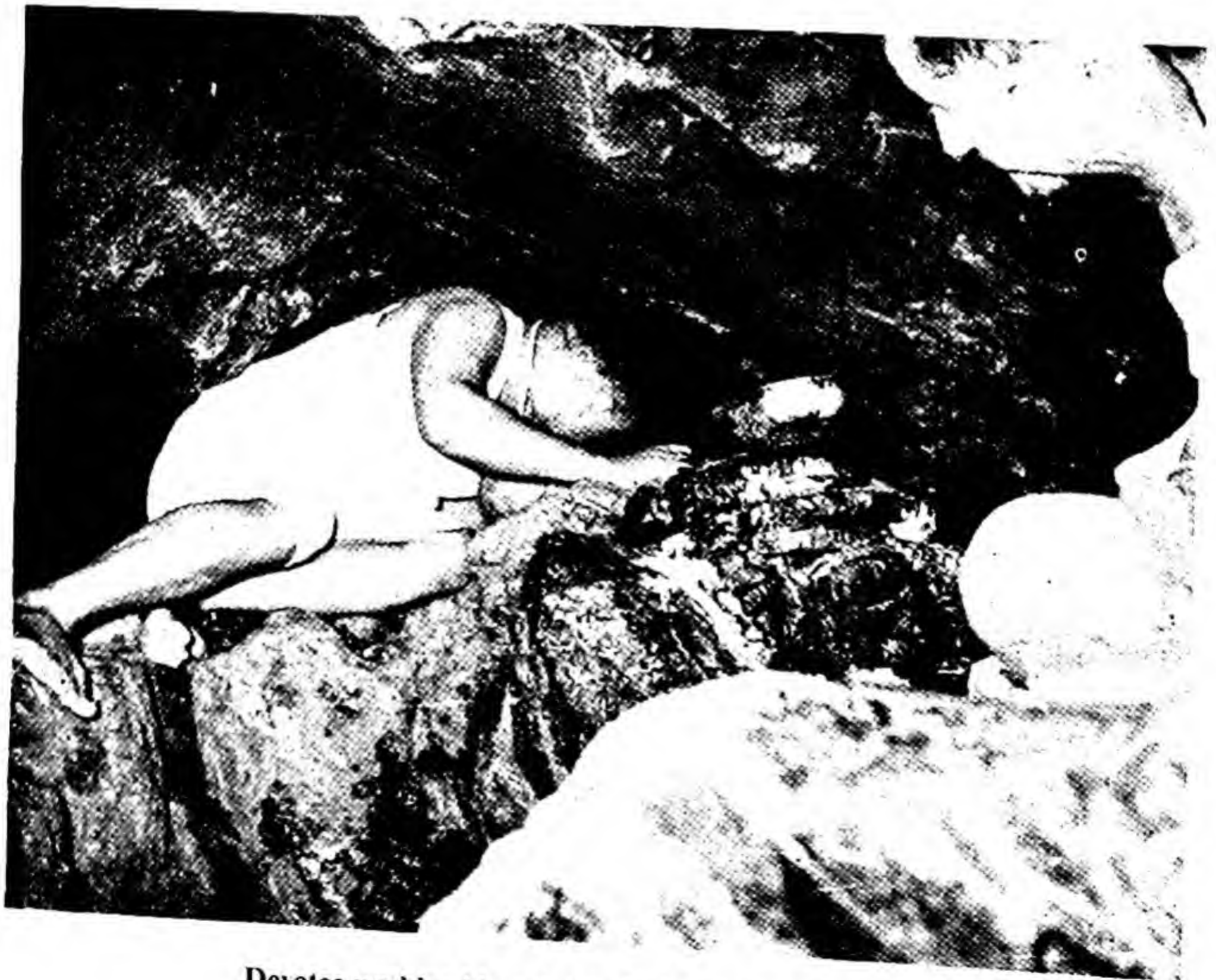
Ad-kunwari: Tank & Temple.



Dr. Karan Singh inaugurating Pratap Bhavan.



Chamunda Devi (Basohli).



Devotee working his way into Vaishno Devi Cave.



Mahakali (Bahu Fort).



Sarthal Devi (Kishtwar).



Mansar Lake.

VAISHNO DEVI

WORSHIP of the Mother Goddess dates back to dim antiquity when it was prevalent among many races and societies in different parts of the world. In India worship of the Mother Goddess goes back to the time of the Indus Valley Civilisation i.e., about 3000 B.C.

The Goddess is a personification of the all-pervading power (*Shakti*) of the all-powerful Lord. In India, the two have always been conceived of as a unity, e.g., *Purusha-Prakriti*, *Shiva-Parvati*, *Lakshmi-Narayan*, *Radha-Krishna*, *Sita-Ram*.

The Goddess is one but the names are many. She is the *Aditi*, mother of gods; she is *Lakshmi*, goddess of fortune; *Saraswati*, goddess of wisdom; *Maha Kali*, destroyer of the evil; *Prithvi*, goddess of earth; *Shailaputri*, daughter of the mountains; *Anna-poorna*, goddess of food; and *Siddhidatri*, giver of *Siddhi*, i.e. success or perfection. And, like the mother, she is overflowing with love (*vatsalya*) for her children. She is benign even to the erring children. She saves us from all sorts of misery and afflictions, from all kinds of difficulties and dangers.

She is the *MAHADEVI* in relation to *MAHADEVA*. She is the Supreme Power responsible for the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe. She is supreme knowledge, greatest good fortune and supreme bliss.

Worship of the Goddess is prevalent in all parts of Jammu Province. There is hardly a District or Tehsil which does not have a *Shakti* shrine of its own. And while many of them are of more than local importance some have attained a countrywide reputation and following.

The best known and the most popular of the *Shakti* shrines in the province is the shrine of Shri Vaishno Devi.

The shrine, which attracts lakhs of pilgrims from all over India, and even abroad, every year, is situated some 39 miles north of Jammu city, the winter headquarters of Jammu & Kashmir Government. The shrine is located in the bosom of a mountain

whose conical peaks rise up in a trinity, giving it the name of *Trikuta*. On this account the shrine is sometimes referred to as the *Trikuta Devi*. On account of the Devi shrine, the mountain range itself is referred to as *Devi-Dhar*.

The shrine is a natural cave in which, on a raised portion of the rock platform, are three small images of *Maha-Saraswati*, *Maha-Lakshmi* and *Maha-Kali*, representing the Creative, Preservative and Destructive aspects of Divine Energy. While the other shrines elsewhere symbolise one or the other aspect of the Divine Energy, Vaishno Devi embraces them all. This gives it a distinction and prominence all its own. In fact it is the only shrine of its kind in the country.

The cave in which the goddess has taken her abode is nearly a hundred feet long. But it is difficult of access. Inside it lies a huge rock and a stream of crystal clear, cold water issuing from a side of the cave flows past it. The stream is known as *Charan Ganga*, or the Ganga washing the lotus-feet of the deity.

After entering the cave through its narrow entrance, one has to wade through the ankle-deep water of the Charan Ganga and crawl over the rock to reach the sanctum sactorum, where one can stand erect. But hardly a dozen persons can be accommodated here at a time. So one can remain but for a few minutes to offer prayers and make offerings. Outside the cave there is a spacious platform where pilgrims and priests join to sing and recite in chorus hymns in praise of the goddess.

The pilgrimage to the holy shrine takes place during the autumn *Navratras* i.e., the first nine days of the bright half of the month of *Assuj* (October). The rush of pilgrims then is so great that one may have to wait a day or two to take his turn to get into the sacred cave. Usually the wait is for a few hours only and is utilised by the pilgrims in *bhajans* and *kirtan*, which, surcharged as they are with devotion, make the atmosphere simply enthralling. This is particularly so in the mornings and evenings. Every one who visits the shrine returns greatly reinvigorated in peace and repose of mind.

The goddess is most benign and bountiful and grants the wishes of her devotees. The result is that the number of pilgrims to the shrine goes on mounting from year to year. The number of pilgrims who now visit the shrine runs into several lakhs as against some thousands only before Partition. In fact the shrine has now

become one of the most prominent places of pilgrimage in north India and is visited not only during the festival days of *Navratras*, both autumn (October) and spring (March-April), but throughout the year. And to avoid rush and inconvenience during festival days, many people prefer to visit it outside those days. So great is the faith of the people in this holy shrine that having visited it once, they visit it again and again. As Katra, the base camp for the pilgrimage is a beautiful little town, commanding a panoramic view of its handsome surroundings, the pilgrims, along with their families, spend a week or ten-days here during which period they make two or three trips to the mountain shrine.

The origin of the pilgrimage is shrouded in mystery. But that it is an ancient shrine, there is no doubt. According to some scholars Trikuta hill and Vaishno Devi are mentioned in the Vedas and other ancient texts. Be that as it may, a number of legends have grown around it and other shrines. Some of these are just silly, as, for example, the one according to which the goddess ran away from her original habitation at Ad-kanwari when pursued by the demon-god, Bhairava with evil intent and took shelter in the present cave. The huge rock inside the cave over which the pilgrims have to crawl to reach the holy of the holies inside the cave is stated to be the petrified body of the demon who was so transformed by a curse of the goddess. Why the all-powerful goddess did not curse him at her original site, or why she should have been so helpless, these simpletons have no explanation for. The truth appears to be that the goddess was worshipped at Ad-kanwari before the cave shrine was discovered.

As already stated, the shrine of Shri Vaishno Devi is at a distance of 39 miles from Jammu City and lies to its north. The first 30 miles to Katra are accessible by a good metalled road. Nineteen of these lie along the National Highway connecting Jammu and Srinagar. At the nineteenth mile, known as Domel i.e., the meeting place of the two roads, the road to Katra branches off to the left. The remaining eleven miles to Katra lie through lovely country overhung with stately pines growing on the hillside.

After covering the first few miles one is able to have a glimpse of the pedestrian track that goes up the Trikuta mountain and the white Ad-kanwari temple which looks like a gem set in its side. Some other stages of the zig-zag mountain path are also visible but

not the main shrine which lies in the bosom of the mountain on the other side.

The base camp for the journey, Katra, at the foot of the mountain is known for its picturesque surroundings and natural scenery. It is at a height of 2918 feet above sea level and is fast growing in popularity. The township is electrified and has plentiful supply of clean water. A local committee, known as Town Area Committee, has considerably improved the look of the town. A park built in the time of a former Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad has considerably added to its charm. There are now a large number of shops and restaurants to cater to the needs of the pilgrims. There are dormitories at the Tourist Reception Centre and *dharmsalas* where one can stay at a small charge or free. Rooms are available in some private houses too. For the more sophisticated there is a well furnished Tourist Bungalow at a moderate rent. A hundred-bed pilgrims' hostel is under construction.

Katra is located at 74.55' longitude and 32.59' latitude. Summer is pretty warm. Days are hot though nights are cool. Winter is mild. But snow falls on the heights of Trikuta mountain when there is heavy rainfall in Katra and adjoining areas in Jammu. This, however, does not deter the pilgrims though the route may get blocked for two or three days. But this is not usual.

Bal Ganga is the first stage on the route to the cave. It is about half a mile from Katra and is reached by a metalled road. Here the pilgrims take a purifying dip in the refreshingly cool water of the mountain stream that flows at the foot of the hill.

The upward hike begins from here. The first place one comes to is the *Charan Padika*. It is about half a mile up, if we take the route that ascends almost vertically up the mountain and about a mile and a half away, if one takes the fair weather path that has been built to provide easy passage to the pilgrims.

Charan Padika, at a height of 3378 feet, is known after the sandals of the goddess. The pilgrims have *darshan* of the goddess in the beautiful little temple here and seek her blessings to be able to accomplish the difficult trek.

In his ascent to the cave, the pilgrim comes across a number of interesting spots. The most important of these is reached at *Ad-Kanwari* which is about two miles from Katra by the steeper route

and about three miles by the longer route from Charan Padika. It is at a height of 4784 feet. This is the main halting stage between Katra and the Cave. There is a spacious plot of land at this place, containing a water tank, tea stalls, *halwais'* shops and a small hotel. Many pilgrims who do not want to cover the journey at a stretch spend the night at Ad-kanwari while others, after taking some rest, resume their journey. There is accommodation here to give shelter to about a thousand persons at a time, mainly in the new *dharmshala* built by the Dharmarth Trust at a cost of Rs. 4 lakhs.

Ad-kanwari has a picturesque temple. There is a small opening or hole in the rocks through which the pilgrims pass. This is popularly known as *GARB-YONI* and passage through it is considered meritorious and a passport to *moksha*. In any case, it is a good exercise. It is good fun to watch a pot-bellied person trying to pass through it in the mistaken belief that it would free him from all his sins.

From Ad-kanwari there is a steep climb to Hathi-Matha at a height of 6200 feet above sea-level. There is a shed for travellers to rest in here. Water for drinking, which one needs so desperately after a steep climb, especially in warm weather, is also available. In fact, at every important stage on the route to the cave, *chhabils* have been put up by philanthropists to provide drinking water free of cost.

Sanji Chhet, the next stage, is the highest point on the track. It is 7215 feet above sea-level and is situated at a distance of 2½ miles from Ad-kanwari and about six miles from Katra.

There is a gradual descent of nearly three-fourths of a mile from Sanji Chhet to Bhairav Ghati, situated 6148 feet above sea-level.

Bhairav Ghati has a small temple dedicated to the demon-god Bhairava which, according to popular belief, should be visited only after *darshan* of the goddess in the sacred cave. The temple houses the head of Bhairava while his petrified body is stated to be inside the cave in the shape of the rock over which the pilgrims have to crawl. The pilgrimage to Shri Vaishno Devi is not considered to be complete without a visit to the temple of Bhairava.

From Bhairav Ghati, one is able to have a first glimpse of *Vaishno Darbar* which bedecks the hillside in front like a cluster of

jewels. The pilgrims on seeing the shrine raise full-throated shouts in praise of the goddess. Shouts of *Jai Mata di* (salutations to the Divine Mother!) *Sheran wali Mata teri sada hi Jai* (Salutations to the Divine Mother whose mount is a lion), *Sanjay Darbar ki Jai* (Obeisance to the sacred Darbar). These slogans are also exchanged by the pilgrims as they pass one another on the upward and downward journey to and from the cave. Little ones (children) and bards sing songs in praise of the goddess at every important stage. During *yatra* days especially, the nine miles or 14 kms long route between Katra and the cave resounds with *Jai Mata di* and similar other slogans.

The sacred Cave is $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Bhairav Ghati. It is 5200 feet above the sea level i.e., at the same height as Srinagar. The path to the cave lies through a thickly wooded forest where the cool refreshing shade of the aromatic trees considerably lightens the fatigue of the difficult climb. Besides, one finds oneself near his destination.

Before entering the cave, the pilgrims have a bath in the water issuing from it. Inside the cave, as also outside it on the spacious platform, known as *Mata Ka Darbar* one feels in the presence of the Divine. There is a strange feeling of peace and exultation; one is simply lost in something greater than oneself.

The offerings consist of coconuts, cash and ornaments, and knots of *mauli*. Some devotees also offer small silver umbrellas and red muslin *dupattas* with silver lining.

With the *darshan* of the deity and making of offerings, the pilgrimage is complete. The pilgrim can now trek back to Katra or stay for the night in the spacious buildings that are available here for the purpose. Woollen blankets and sheets etc. can be had for the asking from the Dharmarth employees. Light refreshment and food can be had, usually at controlled rates, at the *halwais'* shops.

Vaishno Devi's is a most exhilarating and fascinating pilgrimage. Though the formal pilgrimage starts from the first of autumn *navratras* and remains in full swing for about three months, the devotees now visit the shrine throughout the year in large numbers.

During the main *yatra* period it is not unusual for people visiting Kashmir to come across buses and lorries full of gaily attired people—men, women and children—raising full-throated slogans of

Jai Mata di between Jammu and Udhampur. These are people on pilgrimage to Vaishno Devi or on return from there. Earlier, people from Udhampur and Jammu districts would do the journey on foot or on *tongas*. Ponies and even donkeys would be pressed into service to carry chubby children and lovely ladies, clad in *Kameez* (long shirts) and bright coloured *chooridars* (trousers) and *chunnis* (scarves). Not unoften the hardy Dogras wearing huge turbans or *kantopas* (skull caps reaching down to the neck), would carry a *hookah* to relieve the tedium of the journey. People used to come from the Punjab also. Fredric Drew, who was employed in the service of Maharaja Ranbir Singh in the sixties of the last century, has recorded: "In the beginning of the hot weather one every day sees passing through Jummoo numbers of people from the plains, mostly of about the rank of shopkeepers, on their way to this place, with their wives and families, the women mounted astride on a pony and supporting a child or two."

The shrine of Vaishno Devi has the same place in Jammu as that of Amarnath Ji in Kashmir. Both are Cave shrines located in the bosom of mountains. But whereas the Amarnath cave is visited on *Ashad* and *Sravana Poornamashi* only, the pilgrimage to Vaishno Devi extends over the whole year. And whereas Amarnath attracts only ten or twelve thousand people a year, Vaishno Devi attracts four lakhs of devotees.

Though not so difficult or hazardous as the Amarnathji pilgrimage, the Vaishno Devi pilgrimage is not without its own difficulties. It also involves an arduous ascent of more than 5000 feet. Recently, however, a new path has been laid between Hathi-matha and the cave, reducing the distance by two kilometres and the height of the ascent by about a thousand feet.

During the peak period in *Navratras* the rush of pilgrims is so great that you find a long line of pilgrims wending their way up the zig-zag mountain path. It is an inspiring sight to see these pilgrims—men, women and children—doing the arduous trek with faith and determination. There are sophisticated young men and fashionable young ladies, pot-bellied men and bulky women, young and old, rich and poor, going up the mountain each with staff in hand, stopping every now and then to gain breath and raising or responding to the slogans of *Jai Mata di* etc., as they pass the other pilgrims on the way up or down. Seeing

them one feels that spirituality in India is yet alive and will remain so for long years to come.

Unlike Amarnath, the pilgrimage to Vaishno Devi can be covered in a day. But the nine-mile distance from Katra to the sacred cave has to be traversed on foot. Ponies and *dandies* are available for those who cannot go up a mountain. But most devotees prefer a trek on foot as this is believed to earn greater merit. Porters or coolies, locally known as *pithoos* are available for carrying small children and baggage.

During the *yatra* days there is a lot of bustle and activity in Jammu. The bazars, temples, *dharmshalas* and hotels and restaurants are full. The stations at Jammu, Pathankot and Delhi are very busy. Sometimes the waiting pilgrims start *bhajans* and *kirtan* at the railway station itself.

With the provision of the rail link between Pathankot and Jammu (this was thrown open at the beginning of December, 1972) the pilgrims to the shrine coming from Delhi and other parts of the country have been greatly facilitated.

Before Partition of the country, Vaishno Devi shrine was visited by large number of people from areas now included in Pakistan. But now there are few, if any, non-Muslims left in that country. The number of pilgrims to the shrine has, however, not dwindled; the number now is many times more than what it was then. It has increased from 3000 in 1951 A.D. to nearly four lakhs.

Besides people from Jammu, the pilgrims now come from Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. They also come from the more distant States like West Bengal, Maharashtra, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Some of the Indians settled overseas also visit the shrine. So do some of the foreigners visiting India at this time of the year (October-December) for it affords them a good opportunity to witness an Indian pilgrimage in a beautiful setting and in weather which is far from oppressive.

Shree Vaishno Devi has commanded the allegiance of people, high and low, from early times. The founder of the Sikh faith, Guru Nanak and the Maharashtran saint, Nam Dev are believed to have visited the shrine. So also the founder of the Dogra dynasty, Gulab Singh and his successors. The last ruler of the Dogra dynasty, Dr. Karan Singh, now the Minister of Tourism and

Civil Aviation in the Government of India takes keen interest in the development of the shrine and it will be no exaggeration to say that most of the recent improvements here are due to him. Last December he opened a stately *dharmasala* at Ad-Kanwari. The *dharmasala* named *Partap Bhavan* after the saintly Maharaja Pratap Singh, can house some hundreds of people at a time.

Vaishno Devi is one of those great shrines in the country whose reputation has been fast growing in recent years. Shrines after the goddess have grown up in a number of places including Delhi. In the capital and other towns in north India scores of two-seater scooters carry written on them words *Jai Mata di*.

The phenomenal increase in the number of pilgrims to the shrine is posing a problem. Some years back, a proposal was mooted to make another opening in the cave, not only to cope with the heavy rush of pilgrims but also to ensure proper ventilation. But it had to be given up as some of the pilgrims might have considered it sacrilegious to tamper with the natural structure of the cave. But there should be no harm in removing the huge rocky ridge inside the cave over which the pilgrims have to crawl. This would enable over two dozen persons to be in it simultaneously and movement inside the cave would be easier.

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There is only one Reality; the wise give it different names.

The Veda

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FOR SPIRITUAL BLISS

VISIT

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DHARMARTH TRUST

At JAMMU

Maharani TARA DEVI SMARAK, containing 10 rooms and one *Kirtan hall*, and a *Yatri* block in Sri Rughnath Temple, comprising 19 rooms and 3 halls for the pilgrims.

At KATRA

Dharmasala which can accommodate 500 persons at a time. Pratap Bhavan *dharmasala* at Ad-Kanwari which can house 1000 persons at a time.

At BHAVAN

There are arrangements for the stay of about 5000 persons at a time at *Bhavan*, next to the sacred Cave. Blankets, sheets and *durries* are provided free of charge.

Telephone facilities are available at Katra, Bal Ganga, Ad-Kanwari and Bhavan.

Excellent sanitary arrangements have been made at all important points on the upward hike to the sacred Cave. Water for drinking purposes is also available at all stages on the route.

The Trust spends about two lakhs of rupees on the provision of facilities to the pilgrims. This expenditure is over and above that incurred on construction works. Currently a bathing ghat is being constructed at Bhavan at an estimated cost of Rs. 1.20 lakhs. A bathing ghat has already been built at Bal Ganga at a cost of Rs. 50,000. The *sarai* at Ad-Kanwari has cost Rs. 4 lakhs and the sanitary arrangements Rs. 1 lakh.

DHARMARTH TRUST

Maharaja Gulab Singh, founder of Jammu and Kashmir State, established, about a hundred and forty years ago, a FUND for the maintenance and upkeep of existing shrines and temples and the construction of new ones. It was designated as the Treasury of Shri Rughnathji after his family deity. The fund started with a personal donation of five lakhs of rupees by the Maharaja, was added to by his successors.

Maharaja Ranbir Singh set up a Council for the administration of the endowment. A Constitution for its functioning was also sanctioned. He set up a Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya as part of the Rughnath Temple complex and secured a large number of valuable Sanskrit and other texts and manuscripts for the same. His tradition was carried on by his sons, especially Maharaja Partap Singh, and the *vidyalaya* became an important seat of Sanskrit learning in north India.

The example of his predecessors was followed by Maharaja Hari Singh, who threw open all the temples managed by the Trust to the Harijans as early as 1932 A.D. Liberal scholarships were granted to Harijan students in schools and colleges.

In 1947, the Dharmarth Trust threw open all its *dharmsalas* to provide shelter to the refugees from Pakistan-occupied areas of the State. *Langars* to feed them were also set up. The Trust spent Rs. 15 lakhs on provision of relief to the refugees.

The current expenditure of the Trust on the maintenance and upkeep of temples and shrines is Rs. 13 lakhs a year.

SARTHAL DEVI

KASHMIR Valley is deservedly famous as the "Paradise on earth". But there are places in Jammu which are no less beautiful. The handsomest tract in Jammu is the Bhadrawah-Kishtwar area. Bhadrawah is 150 miles from Srinagar, 50 miles from Batote on the National Highway and about 125 miles from Jammu. Kishtwar is a further 50 miles beyond. This tract of land nestling at the foot of towering mountains which rise to 14000 feet and above rivals Kashmir in scenic beauty and grandeur. In fact, Bhadrawah has already acquired the sobriquet of *Chotta Kashmir*. Kishtwar which lies further to the north-east is no less beautiful. The stately *chenar* and the ever-green pine as also the various fruit trees which are the pride of Kashmir, are found here too in plenty. Kishtwar grows saffron also, the only other territory in India besides Kashmir, to do so.

Both Bhadrawah and Kishtwar are about 5400 feet above sea level i.e. slightly higher than the Valley of Kashmir. Little wonder therefore that when Kashmiris had to flee their hearths and homes in times gone by to escape the tyranny of fanatical rulers, they chose this heavenly tract to settle in, and, true to themselves, they installed their patron-deity, Sharika Bhagavati also here.

Sharika is *Ashtadashabuja*, 'goddess with eighteen arms'. This is the name by which the deity is known in Kishtwar-Bhadrawah. On account of its location on the Sarthal mountain, about halfway between Bhadrawah and Kishtwar, it is popularly known as *Sarthal Devi*. There are temples of Ashtadashabuja at Kishtwar and Bhadrawah also.

To get to Sarthal one has to travel to Batote, 70 miles on the National Highway from Jammu. From Batote one has to go to Doda, 30 mile north-east on the Chenab. A further drive of 18 miles brings one to Thathri where the Chenab takes a magnificent turn. Five miles further on we come to Kandini. From here a bridle path of about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles is to be covered on foot or horseback to reach the shrine. Sarthal Devi shrine can be reached from Kishtwar

also, which is about 36 miles from Doda and about 18 miles from Thathri. The distance to be covered from Kishtwar is about a dozen miles but the route is less steep and easier.

Sarthal is at a height of about 7000 feet above sea level. Sarthal Devi, like the shrine of Vaishno Devi, attracts devotees throughout the year. The number is, however, not so great as in the case of Vaishno Devi, mainly because of lack of communications till recently. With the development of these now, the shrine is becoming increasingly popular.

The shrine comprises a temple containing a one-piece black stone image of the goddess with eighteen arms. It is a fine piece of sculpture which has a powerful bewitching effect on the beholder.

The image has come here from Kashmir over five and a half centuries ago. Sultan Sikandar, popularly known as Sikandar the Iconolast, (1389-1413 A.D.) was the ruler of Kashmir then. Under the influence of religious teachers from outside Kashmir, he took delight in demolishing Hindu places of worship and destroying the sacred images therein. According to a popular legend, *Sharika Bhagavati* who resided on the Hari Parbat hill in Srinagar took the form of a small girl and asked a shepherd youth to carry her on his back. The boy was perplexed but obeyed the divine command. As soon as he did so, he was wafted into the air till he came to a place known as Ajaal on the Sarthal mountain. Here he stopped to take some rest. But no sooner had he placed the divine load on the ground than it again turned into stone and a spring of crystal clear water gushed out from under it.

The local chieftain, Agar Dev, who heard about this strange phenomenon came early next morning to pay homage and obeisance. According to a slightly different version the Devi appeared to the Raja in a dream. Next day when he went to the forest to hunt he found the partridges that he shot falling at a particular spot. There he found a resplendent image. He remembered his dream overnight and ordered the image to be taken to his palace. But when it had been carried about a mile to Ajaar, the men carrying it put it on the ground to rest awhile. When they tried to lift it again, they could not do so, try however hard they might. This was interpreted to mean that the Devi wanted her image to be installed at this place. So the Raja got a temple constructed over it.

Shorn of the myth, it is clear that the image was brought to Agar

from Kashmir by some devotees in the calamitous reign of Sikandar. A new temple housing the image is believed to have been put up by Gulab Singh's redoubtable general, Wazir Zorawar Singh Kilorla, who extended India's northern frontiers to the confines of Tibet and Central Asia. Before undertaking his conquering expeditions in Ladakh and Baltistan the great general used to offer worship to the goddess to seek her blessings. Zorawar Singh had secured a *patta* (grant) from his master, Gulab Singh, authorising utilization of the income from the surrounding forest for the maintenance of the shrine.

The shrine is highly venerated. The goddess is believed to grant every wish to her devotees and in particular she is believed to grant children to barren couples. When their hearts' desire is fulfilled, people together with their near and dear ones undertake the pilgrimage to make the plighted offerings. Village people in bright coloured clothes march in processions to the accompaniment of the music of bagpipes, flutes, bugles and drums. En route they sing and dance and raise slogans in praise of the goddess.

Offerings to Sarthal Devi have, besides other things, comprised animal sacrifices. During Dogra rule, it is said, 125 sheep and goats used to be offered every three years. The practice ceased during the time of Maharaja Hari Singh, Animal sacrifices are, however, offered even now.

Devotees visiting the shrine are expected to stay there for the night. There are some *sarais* for this purpose. Before entering the shrine one must take a bath and put on new or washed clothes.

The shrine of Ashtadashabuja attracts thousands of pilgrims from different parts of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and the Punjab. The number is growing from year to year. The pilgrim traffic is expected to receive a big fillip when the Bhadrawah-Basohli and Bhadrawah-Chamba roads, now under construction, are completed. The number of devotees visiting the shrine is particularly large during the *Navratras*. A three-day fair is also held on *Panchmi* in the month of *Bhadrapada*. The mutton of sheep and goats sacrificed before the goddess is distributed among the pilgrims as *prashad*.

There are two other temples near the shrine—one of Seetla Devi (goddess of small pox) and the other of Shiva. A fair is held at the former on *Bhadrapada Amavasaya*, and on *Shivaratri* at the latter.

Contrary to the practice of most Pandits in Kashmir, no meat is cooked on Shivaratri and both men and women keep a fast. In the evening they assemble at the Shiva temple where a big sweetened wheat-flour bread is offered to the Lord and then distributed among those assembled as *prashad*.

The *Amavasya* fair is a much more elaborate affair. It lasts three days. On the night of *Amavasya*, a big fire is lit at some distance from the temple. People gather round it and some persons, who develop mystic powers, go to the temple where they receive a few tridents and swords. They return to dance throughout the night. At about 4. a.m., nine big flambeaux are carried to a big *deodar* tree in the forest, amidst the blowing of huge trumpets etc. On return the dancers walk (without any burns or injury) on the red hot embers of the smouldring fire. They then go to the temple and deposit the swords and tridents and their mystic intoxication is gone. A goat or sheep is sacrificed in the temple compound at this stage. According to one version the dancers drink the warm blood of the freshly killed animal.

The festival continues during the next two days when the devotees offer worship and sacrifices. There is much merry making, including cultural programmes, gymnastics etc., etc.

Guru Nanak who spent some time in Kishtwar and Bhadrawah during his sojourn in Jammu & Kashmir is believed to have visited Sarthal and some other shrines in the area.

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Truth is the greatest strength.

Mahabharata

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SUKRALA DEVI

KASHMIR enjoyed in the past, as it enjoys now also, high renown among the people of India as a place of pilgrimage. Despite difficulties and hazards of travel in those early days, people from different parts of the country went to the celestial valley to offer worship at the well known shrines of *Shri Amarnathji*, *Sharadaji* and *Sharika Bhagawati*. There is historical evidence to show that people came from as far away as Bengal, Maharashtra and Kerala to pay homage to the gods and goddesses here. Naturally people in the neighbouring territories like Jammu came in larger numbers. Also, as we have already seen, some people fled their homes in the valley under pressure of persecution or natural calamities like famines and pestilences. In course of time, shrines after the famous Kashmir shrines came to be founded here, for the Kashmir shrines were rather distant and difficult of approach.

We have already seen the Sharika Devi shrine of Hari-Parbat in Srinagar reincarnated in the Ashtadashabuja of Sarthal, Kishtwar. Another similar shrine is that of *Jagatjanani Rajarajeswari Mata Mal Devi* at Sukrala in Billawar Tehsil of Kathua District. This is a reincarnation of the famous Sharada shrine of Kashmir.

Sukral is a small village located in the side of a pine-covered hill. Situated at a height of 3500 feet it commands an idyllic view of the mountains around and the fields spread out at its feet. The village is about half a dozen miles from Billawar town and is situated to its north-east.

Unlike Sarthal and Vaishno Devi shrines, Sukral, though it also is situated at a height, can be reached by car or bus for it is connected with Billawar by a good metalled road. Billawar is reached from Kathua by a metalled road, 16 miles long. Sukral is situated uphill at a distance of about half a dozen miles.

The name Sukral is derived from *Sharikalaya*, "the abode of *Sharika*", which is another name of *Sharada*.

There is an interesting story about the origin of the shrine: There lived a great saint at Basohli; he had received his education

at Kashi and in Kashmir where he had paid visits to a number of shrines, including those of Amarnath and Sharada. He was a great devotee of the goddess, who, pleased with his worship and penance, blessed him with her *darshan*. When asked what he wanted, he said that he would like the goddess to be in his locality also so that his people would have her blessings. The goddess granted his request but said that she would appear there in the time of his grandson.

The pious Brahman had a number of sons. Of these the two most erudite and pious were named Amolak Ram and Mahadev. They adopted Billawar and Basohli as their places of residence. In the time of Shivanandan, one of their sons, a *shila* or "stone slab" miraculously started rising from the spring at Sukral. The people at once recalled the prophecy of his grandfather and accepted it as the emblem of the goddess and started worshipping it.

Some time after, a Chamba prince, Madho Singh or Medh Singh, who had been exiled by his elder brother, happened to come to Billawar during his wanderings. One day he went to Sukral which was then a dense forest and shot a number of animals. On return to Billawar he fell seriously ill. Despite all available treatment, he did not recover. He therefore sent for Shivanandan who enjoyed a high reputation on account of his learning and piety and sought his help. Shivanandan asked a *chela* or devotee of the goddess, named Hira Thakur, to dance. When the disciple got into a trance he was asked the cause of Medh Singh's malady. Hira Thakur retorted that the goddess was very angry with him as he had committed a sacrilege by hunting in her forest. He added that the prince would not recover until he built a temple for the goddess with material from Chamba.

The exiled prince wondered how he could do that. For he was not only ill but was living far away from Chamba which he could visit only on pain of death. He revealed his dilemma to Shivanandan and Hira Thakur. The dancing disciple replied that the exiled prince should return to Chamba immediately and no one would stop his entry there.

Soon after the prince got well and after worshiping at the shrine left for the Chamba. Enroute he came to know that his brother, the ruling prince, was dead and the people had accepted him as the ruler in his place.

In the cares of administration and in the joys and revelry of his new status, the prince forgot about the promise he had made to build a temple at the shrine of Mal Devi at Sukral. But he was painfully reminded of it when, one day, he suddenly fell down from his bed with a thud. This alarmed him much. He at once fell on his feet, prayed to the goddess and resolved to make good his promise. Next day he started for Sukral with a large entourage, carrying building materials etc. The temple was duly erected. An image of *Mahishasurmuradini* was installed in it later in the time of Raja Brajraj Singh, son of Ranjit Singh Dev 1755 A.D. Thus was his promise redeemed. The Raja got a number of *baulies* constructed.

As at Sarthal, offerings to the goddess at Sukral consisted of goats. A large number of them used to be sacrificed on Tuesdays and Sundays. In course of time, however, animal sacrifices fell into disuse. Instead the votary would purchase a goat for a small sum from the *pujaris*, dedicate it to the goddess, and then let it go free. The same animal could thus be offered a number of times, to the maximum advantage of the *pujaris*.

Mal Devi of Sukral is also a very benign goddess who ensures the fulfillment of her devotees' wishes and prayers. According to Sri R.C. Kak the popular belief is: "Anyone with some object to achieve, be it the birth of a son, getting rid of a chronic illness, the return of an absent relative or securing a livelihood, may promise that if his or her desire is fulfilled, he or she will perform a sacrifice at the shrine, and his wish is bound to be fulfilled." The shrine is therefore very popular and with the construction of a motorable road to it, the number of pilgrims has been mounting from year to year.

The present temple at Sukral is believed to be the one built by the Chamba prince. The image of Malla is a *shila* (piece of natural rock). It is seated on a brass lion with a silver mounted head. Behind it is a figure of *Mahishasurmuradini* (Durga) standing on the body of *Mahishasura*. The goddess is *chaturbhuj*a or four-armed, with a sword in one of her hands. The eyes are of silver inlaid with a dark vermilion gem. The temple is covered with a coat of lime. On the plinth of the temple is a small shrine containing a few coarse sculptures including those of Vishnu reclining under the hoods of *Sheesha* with Lakshmi pressing his feet. From his navel springs

a lotus, on which is seated a fourheaded Brahma, and a five-faced Shiva and a Ganesh. There are two crudely carved lions in front of the temple. There is also a small tank dug into a rock, built possibly by Medh Singh himself. But it is now mostly dry. A number of *baulies* he got constructed, are yet extant.

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Thou art the lustre in the moon and effulgence in the sun,
 Thou art the taste in water and warmth in the flame,
 Thou art consciousness in men and velocity in the wind,
 Bereft of Thou the world would be devoid of substance.

Panchastavi

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OTHER SHAKTI SHRINES

BALAJI SUNDARI

KATHUA District has the distinction of possessing another prominent Devi shrine. This is the shrine of Balasundri. It lies near the town of Kathua itself—in village Nagri on the outskirts of the town. Parole-Nagri is about half a dozen miles from Kathua town, and about eight miles from the National Highway. The temple lies in a tall grove of mango trees.

There is a curious story relating to this temple also. It is said that once a Brahman cutting grass struck his sickle against a piece of stone and blood appeared on it. He was astonished as his hands were not at all injured. At night he had a vision of the goddess who asked him to place the stone under a *banyan* tree. When this became known people began to flock to the place to offer prayers. A temple was erected in course of time. The fame of the shrine spread and it is said that once there came a Mughal Prince who expressed doubt about the sanctity of the shrine. Immediately he was stung by a swarm of bees. He fell on his feet, begged forgiveness and was thus saved after he had made obiesance to the goddess.

This made the shrine even more famous and people began to flock to it in larger numbers for spiritual satisfaction and for the fulfilment of their desires.

A three-day fair is held here on the concluding two days of the *Navratras* and concludes with a *havan* or *yajna*. About fifteen thousand persons attend the fair. The number of women pilgrims far exceeds that of men.

CHI CHI DEVI

LIKE Kathua, Jammu District can also boast of two prominent Shakti shrines. One of these is near Samba, about two dozen miles from Jammu on the National Highway, and the other opposite to Jammu city itself.

Visitors to Kashmir will recall that soon after leaving Samba, (situated at a distance of 25 miles from Jammu) where the buses halt for a while to enable passengers to have tea or cold drinks there is a beautiful white temple, glistening amidst the trees that clothe the mountainside. The temple is on the bank of the Basantar river, about 2 kms from Samba town and houses an image of Chichi Devi, besides others. Chichi Devi is mentioned in *Durga Saptashati*. The Devi is considered to be a remover of diseases. People with various ailments therefore flock to the place. The shrine is very popular with Mahajans, who come from great distances to perform the *mundan* (first hair-cut) ceremony of their children.

The fame of the Chichi Devi shrine which always stood high among the people of the neighbourhood has now spread to Jammu and other places and a large number of devotees visit it during the *Navratras*. A big fair takes place here on *Ashtami* and *Navmi*. The *Yajna* on *Ashtami* is preceded by a big *sat-sangh* on *Saptami*.

The temple commands a fine view of Samba town and Basantar river on the banks of which the town of Samba and the shrine of Chichi Devi are situated, though on opposite sides.

According to a local legend, Samba town is known after the legendary Raja Sambh, a Yudvamshi i.e. a scion of the dynasty to which Sri Krishna himself belonged. Under a curse by sage Durvasas he got involved in leprosy which could not be cured by the medicine-men of the day. To be rid of it he was advised to bathe daily in the Basantar flowing at the foot of the Chichi Devi shrine and thereafter to carry the waters of the stream and pour them over the Shiva *Lingam* in Maheshwar *mandir* in the town of Samba. This cured him completely.

According to a slightly different version, Raja Sambh who was ruler of Dwarka was counselled by a sage to go to the jungle where now stands Samba town, bathe in the waters of the Basantar river (then known as Vishvamitra) and offer worship in the temples of the Devi and Shiva on opposite sides of the river. The disease-ridden king resorted to the place to do as he was bid. One day while on his way to the river he was overtaken by a terrible storm followed by a heavy downpour in which he was drenched to the skin. When the storm subsided and the rain stopped the king found, to his great astonishment and relief, that his body was completely rid of the disease.

The present temple is of recent construction and is stated to have been built by a Jammu businessman. A spacious *dharmshala* has been put up by members of the Mahajan community.

MAHAKALI TEMPLE, BAHU

JAMMU City has two very popular Shakti shrines, the Mahakali temple inside Bahu Fort and the Mahalakshmi temple in the city.

The Mahakali *mandir* is situated on a hillock opposite to the city. It lies inside the fort, originally built by the legendary ruler, Bahu Lochan, brother of Jambu Lochan. The temple built on an elevated platform is a small one and can hardly hold a dozen or so persons at a time. It houses a black stone image of Mahakali. The offerings to the goddess comprise sweets, puffed rice, flowers and floral wreaths, besides cash. Earlier the votive offerings comprised animal sacrifices also. But now a way has been found to avoid these. Goats, of course, are there still. But they are no longer beheaded. On the contrary, as we have seen at Sukral, the goat is purchased for a small sum and after the priest has muttered some incantations and the devotee sprinkled a handful of water on it, the animal reverts to its own. Many devotees make offerings of *kadha* (pudding) on the fulfilment of their cherished desires.

Bahu fort lies on the road leading to Surinsar. With the improvement in the road, as a result of the abortive oil-drilling project at Surinsar, the number of visitors to the shrine has witnessed a phenomenal increase. Thousands visit it on Tuesdays and Sundays. While many go in cars, tempos and buses, quite a number trek to the place on foot, after fording the Tawi. In fact, it is a refreshing walk to the shrine and back on foot early in the morning, especially for pot-bellied persons who want to get rid of unwanted fat.

A noteworthy feature of the shrine is the presence of large numbers of monkeys in its premises. These subsist on sweets, gram, etc offered to them by the pilgrims. They are very bold and audacious and will snatch away from the hands of the unwary even the packets of offerings for the goddess.

The place bustles with activity during the *Navratras* when a regular bazar grows up where sweets, toys, glass bangles etc., are

sold. A number of shops selling sweets and flowers are there permanently.

The people of Jammu hold the shrine in great esteem and believe that if approached in the right spirit, the goddess will grant your wishes and remove your difficulties.

KALIKA, POONCH

Poonch District in the north-west of Jammu and Kashmir State is also a lovely area. Most of it is under the unlawful occupation of Pakistan. But the town of Poonch lies in the area that is with us. It contains a number of temples and mosques.

The most important temple of this strategic border town is the Kalika Mandir. This stone temple rising some 60 ft. high is located in a crowded area. It was erected by Raja Moti Singh, an able administrator who is still remembered for his benevolence and public works. The temple houses a black marble image of Kalika, stated to have been brought from Jodhpur in Rajasthan.

It is said that the image could not be put up immediately and remained un-installed for about six months, when a raging pestilence swept the area. Raja Moti Singh who was then in Kashmir hurried back. Medical aid was arranged and prayers offered in temples and mosques, but to no avail. Moti Singh was greatly upset. He was advised, in a dream, to get the image installed at once if he wanted his realm to be rid of the malady. This was done and the pestilence subsided.

The temple miraculously escaped damage and destruction in 1947-48 and 1965 A.D., when Pakistanis aimed their guns on the town. The temple *kalasa* stood out prominently and was made the special target by Pakistani gun-men but all their attempts ended in failure.

BHADRAKALI

There is hardly any area in the province which does not have a prominent Shakti shrine. Bhadrawah Tehsil has a number of them. In fact the locality derives its name from *Bhadrakali*, whose home it was before she gave it to Vasuki when he supplicated her for refuge and protection to escape the fury of Garuda. Bhadra-

kali then took her abode on the Kailash mountain in what is known as *Kali Kund*. But there still are temples to her in Bhadrawah and neighbouring villages.

The Bhadrakali temple in the town is just behind the Vasuki temple at Nagar. Another temple of the goddess is near the Vasuki temple at Gatha. There are other temples to the goddess in the adjoining villages. There are a number of Seetla temples too.

There is a Kali temple in the Fort (Ratangarh) which commands a panoramic view of the verdant valley and the town. It was built by a Chamba Raja.

According to Kahn Chand Billawaria, author of *Tarikh-i-Rajagan Jammu wa Kashmir* a buffalo used to be offered in sacrifice at the Bhadrakali temple in the town. But this practice has ceased.

ASHTADASHABHUJA DEVI

In addition there is an Ashtadashabhuja temple (wooden, like the Vasuki Nag temple) just behind the Dak Bungalow on a low spur. It is beautifully located and commands a superb view of the whole locality. The sacred image with eighteen arms is small but extremely beautiful. Another shrine known as *Atharabuja* or Rahushri Devi is on a hilltop five miles east of Chinta. A big mela takes place here, as also at the Dandasan Devi, on another hill during the *navratras*.

CHAMUNDA DEVI

Basohli has a Chamunda Devi, in one of the small temples on the side of the open *chougan*. The shrine is remarkable because the image of the goddess worshipped here is a piece of natural rock.

PINGALA DEVI

Ramnagar Tehsil, which intervenes between Basohli and Bhadrawah has a "Pingala" Devi shrine. The image lies in a narrow cave on a hill about 14 miles from the town. The road is *kacha* and the terrain hilly. Despite this the cave shrine attracts many pilgrims, especially during the *Navratras*.

The cave is situated at a height of 3500 feet. Water drips from

its ceiling where the image is. It is said that a lion once took refuge in the cave when the people were chasing him with intent to kill. But there occurred an opening in the rocks overhead through which he made good his escape. People ascribed it to the Devi's grace.

MANMA DEVI

A little beyond Kalakot, on the right side of the road (to Rajouri), across a ravine, is another small cave shrine. This is the shrine of Manma Devi, who is regarded as an incarnation of Vaishno Devi.

MANSA DEVI

There is a shrine of Mansa Devi in Ramnagar. It lies at the meeting place of the Mansa *nullah* with another stream and is about 12 miles from the town.

Mansa Devi is the goddess of serpents and the annual fair takes place on *Chaitra Chaudish* when people, especially women, from outlying villages visit the place to take a bath in the *nullah*.

SATI TEMPLE, RAMNAGAR

Sati, a woman who willingly burnt herself with her deceased husband on the funeral pyre, has always been held in high esteem in Hindu society, for this deed of self-immolation was the highest that could be conceived of in the matter of self sacrifice.

This esteem of Hindu society for the supreme self-sacrifice of Hindu woman has found concrete expression in a beautiful little temple inside the Ramnagar fort. It is stated to have been built in memory of the three *Ranis* of the handsome Raja Suchet Singh, brother of Gulab Singh, who committed *sati* when, following his death by fraud at Lahore, his head was brought to Ramnagar. The ill-fated *Ranis* are said to have burnt themselves with it.

The *samadhi* of these pious ladies is to be found on the bank of the Basantar river near Samba. A *mela* takes place here on *Baisakhi*. Suchet Singh's *samadhi* is at Jammu, outside the Old Secretariat.

**THE RANBIR SANSKRIT RESEARCH INSTITUTE,
J A M M U**

The Institute houses the rich collection of ancient texts and manuscripts, most of them rare, collected by Maharaja Ranbir Singh and his successors for the Rughnath Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya. Numbering several thousands, these can be classified broadly under the headings of Vedas, Upanishads, Tantras, Poetry and Drama, Grammar and Poetics, and Music, Astrology and Astronomy. The manuscripts are in Sanskrit, Hindi, Persian and Urdu. There are over five dozen manuscripts in Tamil and a few in Arabic and Tibetan (Ladakhi) also.

The Institute is an invaluable storehouse of learning and knowledge and a favourite haunt of scholars. One of the rare manuscripts in the collection is *Shatapatabrahmana*, believed to be over 1000 years old. Another similar manuscript is *Sidhanta-Shuda-Nidhi*, believed to be 600 years old. It comprises all its eight parts and is claimed to be the only complete copy of the text found in the country.

**INSTITUTE OF KASHMIR SHAIVISM,
SRINAGAR**

The Trust has also built a spacious hall for the Institute of Kashmir Shaivism at Ishabar near Nishat Garden on the bank of Dal Lake, Srinagar, where the foremost living exponent of Kashmir Shaiva philosophy, SWAMI LAKSHMAN JI delivers discourses on KASHMIR SHAIVISM every Sunday during summer months.

RUGHNATH MANDIR

JAMMU has the distinction of possessing what might with justification be called one of the greatest temples of north India. This is *Rughnath Mandir*.

Rughnath temple is not just one temple. It is a unique temple complex, comprising as many as seventeen temples whose spires rise up as though in prayer. The only other temple with which it could aptly be compared is the Laxmi Narayan temple, or Birla Mandir, as it is popularly known, in New Delhi. But whereas the temple in the capital is much more ornate, the Rughnath temple contains more sacred sculptures and possesses one of the richest collections of ancient texts and manuscripts. A big college, *Mahavidyalaya* is run as part of the temple complex.

Rughnath Mandir is not an ancient shrine. It is barely a hundred and twenty years old. The foundation stone of the temple was laid by Maharaja Gulab Singh, founder of the modern Jammu & Kashmir State in 1851 A.D. The temple was inaugurated by his son and successor, Ranbir Singh in 1857 A.D. Ranbir Singh was a truly enlightened prince devoted to the cause of India's ancient lore and religion. He was a truly religious man and had equal respect for all faiths.

Rughnath Mandir is at almost the southern end of the city of Jammu as it was, just a few furlongs from the Tawi, which earlier formed its southern boundary.

The temple complex is named after the main shrine, which contains images of Rughnathji, i.e. Sri Rama, his consort, Sita and his devoted brother, Lakshman. The main temple was erected in honour of Sri Rama, or Rughnath, the patron deity of the Dogra dynasty which claimed its descent from the *Suryavamsi* Rajputs. But there is hardly any god that is not represented, the emphasis, however, being on the various incarnations of Vishnu.

The walls of the main temple have enshrined in the niches the various *nakshatras* and *dishas* (directions) such as *Ketu*, *Rahu*, *Shani*, *Budh*, *Brihaspati*, *Uttar*, *Purab*, and so on. Offerings to

the main shrine comprise sweets, flowers, cash, etc. These are offered at the gate, and none is usually permitted inside. The *prashad* which the temple priest distributes comprises sweets and puffed rice. *Charanamrit* is also given. Devotional songs and classical *ragas* are sung inside the temple every afternoon. The *arati* in the evening by the students of the Rughnath Mahavidyalaya is simply enthralling and uplifting.

The main temple is enclosed within an enclosure. As one comes out one finds on his left a gigantic portrait of Ranbir Singh in his kingly robes and on the right a similarly imposing image of the monkey-god Hanuman. There are also on the sides, six big halls, containing innumerable *shaligramas* and a host of sacred images. Some of these images are masterpieces of the sculptor's art. According to the temple priests, the *shaligramas*, got from the banks and the bed of the Narmada river, number 12½ lakhs.

The enclosure contains on the outside a number of temples, in which are various incarnations of Vishnu, besides Shiva and his elephant-headed son, Ganesh. The Vishnu images are those of *Narasimha* (Man-lion incarnation), *Matsya* (Fish incarnation), *Kurma* (Tortoise incarnation) and *Varaha* (Boar incarnation). There are also images of *Satya Bhagwan*, *Lakshmi*, *Radha Krishna*, *Virat* (Lord in his cosmic aspect), *Vamana* (lord in his Dwarf incarnation), *Bharatji* and *Shaturgun* (Sri Rama's half-brothers), *Dasaravana* and *Vishnu* relaxing on *Shecsha*. A Surya image is housed in the Shiva temple which contains eleven Shiva lingas or *Ekadasha-Rudra*.

The cemented platform, partly tiled, which goes around the whole enclosure is used as the circumambulatory path.

Then comes a narrow strip of land in which are grown flowers and sacred shrubs, like *tulsi*. Beyond this is another cemented circumambulatory path.

While the inner circumambulatory path can be covered without shoes only, one can go the round on the outer one with the shoes on. No one can take his shoes inside the temple. There are two small rooms outside in which shoes can be kept free of any charge. There are also two to three water taps for washing one's hands and feet before going into the temple. There is a *piao* also, supplying drinking water.

Outside the main gate are to be found a number of flower sellers

from whom the devotees purchase flowers for offering to the deities. Inside the porch is a shop for sale of sacred books, incense etc.


The outer wall of the temple which leads to the imposing gateway on the east, again has a number of temples in a straight line containing imposing Shiva *lingas*. These have been built in memory of various Dogra rulers. The platform outside one of these is used for *katha* (religious discourse) in the morning and evening.

Beyond the temples is a modern *dharmsala* built by Dr. Karan Singh in memory of his mother, Maharani Tara Devi. To the north of this *dharmsala* and in the east are a number of small rooms for students of the *Rughnath Mahavidyalaya* to stay in. The *Vidyalaya* as also its excellent library lie towards the east. Between the outer circumambulatory path and the last enclosure is open space, which is used by *sadhus* and ascetics to stay in. Large numbers of Vaishno Devi pilgrims stay in the temple precincts when the pilgrimage is at its peak during the *Navratras*.

The Rughnath mandir has been the hub of Jammu's social and cultural activities. Even now large numbers of people flock to the temple in the evenings. The *dharmsala* and the rooms which are available for travellers to stay in are a boon to the pilgrims and those visiting Kashmir. These, however, need to be added to, in view of the continuous rise in the number of pilgrims to Vaishno Devi and the visitors to Kashmir. More so because the hotel accomodation in Jammu is far from adequate, and rather costly.

The bare ground inside the temple is an eyesore. So also the two small plaques unimagnatively put on the porch walls inside. It would add greatly to the charm of the temple-complex if the bare ground within its precincts were turfed, with a few fountains and flower beds thrown in between.


Arrangements should be made for discourses on religious topics by leading Pandits and scholars in the afternoons, especially during the Vaishno Devi *yatra* days. A small library with a good reading room, equipped with *dharmic* publications and journals would also be a welcome addition.




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RUGHNATH MAHAVIDYALAYA & PUSTAKALAYA

DOGRA rulers were greatly devoted to their religion. They not only set up a large number of temples in Jammu and Kashmir but also provided for religious instruction to their Hindu subjects. For this purpose, Ranbir Singh set up a *Mahavidyalaya* as part of the temple in 1858 A.D.


Hundreds of students received their education here, free of cost. Those coming from outside Jammu were lodged in the rooms in the temple and were given free food and clothing.

Scholars from different places known for Sanskrit scholarship were invited to join the institution and were given liberal rewards by the Maharaja.

Four halls were specially constructed amidst the soaring shrines of the temple, each dedicated to one *Veda*. Each of them was embellished with thousands of *shaligramas* and many appropriate marble images of gods, goddesses and ancient sages. The teaching of the Vedas was an important part of the curriculum. The four Vedas were taught by *gurus* well versed in them and the images in the halls served to illustrate their discourses. In addition to this, *shastrarthas* were held periodically in which learned pandits from different places participated.

This 113-year old institution has now been taken over by the Union Education Ministry. It was proposed to be shifted to Uttarbahni where Ranbir Singh had set up another of his great *Vidyalayas*. But presently it is working at Gandhinagar, Jammu. The scope of the curriculum has been widened and in addition to Sanskrit studies, it now embraces within its fold modern subjects and languages, including English. Currently about a hundred students are on its rolls, some others having had to be rejected for want of accommodation.

The Dharmarth Trust, however, continues to run a *pathshala* in the premises of the Rughnath Mandir which serves as the feeder institution for the bigger one at Gandhi Nagar. It has




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over a hundred students on its rolls. The Rughnath Sanskrit Pathshala also holds classes for studies in *Karma Kand*. Currently it has nearly a dozen such students on rolls, including one who has passed out from the Gandhi Nagar institution with his M.A. in Sanskrit.

Ranbir Singh was a great patron of learning. His court attracted learned men from all over India. These included Pt. Brij Lal of Jaipur, Pt. Rasmohan Bhattacharya from Bengal and Khalifa Noor-ud-Din, first successor of Mirza Ghulam Ahmed of Qadian, besides a large number of scholars from Jammu and Kashmir.

In a reference to his educational policy, Sir Aurel Stein, the well known antiquary and translator of the *Rajatarangini* observes: "Translations into Hindi of standard works, selected from the whole range of *Darshanas*, the *Dharma* and other *shastras*, were executed and partly printed with the object of spreading a knowledge of classical Hindu learning among the Maharaja's Dogra subjects. Again, Persian and Arabic works on historical, philosophical and other subjects were translated into Sanskrit with the assistance of competent *Moulvis* in order to facilitate that exchange of ideas as the Maharaja, in a spirit of true enlightenment, desired to promote between the representatives of Hindu and Mohammedan scholars in his dominions". Saidi's *Gulistan* was got written in Persian with a translation in Hindi. *Bhagvadagita* was similarly got written in Sanskrit with the translation in Persian by Faizi and Raja Jai Singh. Some Ladakhi texts and manuscripts were also got translated with the assistance of competent Ladakhi and Tibetan scholars.

The Maharaja built up a library or *pustakalaya* as an adjunct to the Rughnath *Mahavidyalaya*. He spared neither effort nor money to enrich his collection. Liberal sums of money were offered for manuscripts and texts not only in Sanskrit but for some in Persian, Arabic and Hindi also. If money failed to purchase or buy a manuscript, it was got copied by highly qualified Pandits working as copyists at Banaras, Jammu and Srinagar.

Ranbir Singh inherited the love of Sanskrit from his illustrious father who, however, did not have much time to attend to it. But he too got translated into Sanskrit military terms from English.

Dr. Stein who catalogued the manuscripts says that "it was the Maharaja's desire to revive the study of Vedic texts which in his dominions as well as Punjab had practically ceased for centuries".

OTHER VISHNU SHRINES

THERE are a number of Vishnu shrines in Jammu. And considering that Vishnu in his Sri Rama or Rughnath incarnation was the family deity of the Dogra rulers, it is hardly to be wondered at. But all these do not belong to the time of the Dogra rulers only. Some of them, as we shall see, were there before the advent of Dogra rule.

The Vishnu shrines in the province can be classified as Rughnath temples and as the temples of Gadadhar or Lakshmi Narayan, Radha Krishna and Narasimha.

RUGHNATH TEMPLES

The first Rughnath temple which the founder of the Dogra dynasty built is at Sui-Simbli, 13 miles from Jammu. Gulab Singh put it up to honour the memory of his *Guru*, Bawa Prem Dass who had forecast his future greatness.

There are Rughnath temples at Kishtwar and Ramban, which contain images of Sri Rama, Sita and Lakshman. While the temple at Kishtwar was constructed in Dogra times, the shrine at Ramban may have existed much earlier, giving the locality its name. The present temple, however, is a recent construction and might have been erected in Dogra times. There is another temple of Sri Rama at Kishtwar, near the *Gudrash Nag* which supplies drinking water to the town. There is a beautiful Rughnath temple at Purani Mandi in Jammu City. Another Rughnath temple is to be found at Panch Tirthi, next to the Maharaja's new Palace. It houses images of Sri Rama, Sita and Lakshman. There are a number of residential rooms surrounding the temple which are rented. There are a Sri Rama temple and a Sri Krishna temple in Poonch also. The latter is over 60 feet high.

LAKSHMI NARAYAN TEMPLES

There is a very good Lakshmi Narayan temple at Bhadrawah. It was built by one Wazir Sobha Ram. He is stated to have purchased a Derby Lottery ticket and pledged that he would build a temple if he got the prize. He got the prize of one lakh of rupees and built the temple of Lakshmi Narayan. A good *dharmshala* is attached to it. But both the temple and the *dharmshala* are showing signs of neglect.

The great Dogra general, Zorawar Singh, built a Lakshmi Narayan temple at Barshala opposite to Thathri, across the Chenab. The temple of Vishnu and his consort Lakshmi has recently been renovated by the village people largely through voluntary contributions of money and labour. There is a Gadadhar or Lakshmi Narayan temple at Uttarbahni also. Both this and the Radha Krishna temple near the Vegetable Market in the city, were built in Ranbir Singh's time. So perhaps was the Radha Krishan temple inside the city. It is popularly known as Dewan Mandir, pointing possibly to its construction by his Dewan or Chief Minister. It contains images of Radha and Krishna.

There is a 70-foot high Lakshmi Narayan temple at Poonch adjoining the Parade Ground. The temple miraculously escaped damage when the Pakistanis aimed their guns on it during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war. A refugee child standing on its outer staircase was blown off, but the temple was not affected in the least even though it was clearly visible from the enemy positions.

A Lakshmi Narayan temple has recently been put up in the Gandhi Nagar area of Jammu City.

MANDIR SHIVNABHJI

The Dogra rulers had put up a small Vishnu temple inside the Palace itself. Known as Mandir Shivnabji, it was a private temple meant for members of the ruling family only. The temple is so called because it contains a Vishnu image with a Shiva-linga come out from the god's navel. Some people describe it as a Shiva temple. Built by Maharaja Ranbir Singh, the small temple has recently been renovated at a cost of Rs. 20,000.

According to a popular legend Maharaja Pratap Singh was

commissioned by the god in a dream to get the image from Banaras where it was. Accordingly he sent his men to trace it out in the holy city. It was only after a prolonged search that they were able to locate it. The owner was adequately compensated and the image got and installed in the Maharaja's Palace temple.

The temple was held in high esteem and all the treaties and deeds of surrender by the vanquished princes and the treasures got from them were placed at the feet of the deity and deposited in the temple. Besides Vishnu's, the temple contains metallic images of a number of other deities. The main shrine is of marble with a gold-plated dome. It lies in a big room whose walls are decorated with a number of paintings.

A remarkable thing about the temple is that it is single-storied. It is said that the Dogra rulers believed that the shadow of a temple falling on the Palace was inauspicious. So the temple, as also the temples of *Mata Mal Devi*, *Bua Ranu* and *Maha Kali*, in the adjoining compound, had all to be single-storied and flat-roofed. The much bigger Gadadhar temple outside the Palace (now known as the Old Secretariat) is also single-storied and flat on top.

The temples are popular places of worship and attract large numbers of devotees on *Janam Ashtami*, *Ram Navmi* and *Maha Navmi*.

RADHA KRISHNA TEMPLE, RAJAURI

This temple is situated on a sandstone ridge, about 400 yards south of the bridge on the *Selani nallah*. The temple stands in the centre of a square-walled compound and is approached by a double flight of steps. The sanctum is surrounded by a circumambulatory path. The temple with its conical *shikhara* rises from the roof of the lower storey, and being perched on the summit of the rock, which is nearly 70 ft. high from the bed of the *nullah*, commands a very wide view. The entrance to the temple is in the centre of the western compound-wall, accessible by a steep flight of steps. On either side of the entrance is an arched niche containing a high pedestal topped by a conical coping stone.

The temple is said to have been built by Mian Hathu, an enemy of Gulab Singh, who took a prominent part in the conspiracy against the life of Ranbir Singh and for this crime had to spend the rest of his life as a prisoner in the Gajpat Fort near Ramban.

GADADHAR TEMPLE

A Gadadhar temple was built by Gulab Singh soon after he became the ruler of Jammu. This temple, just outside the Old Palace buildings (now known as Old Secretariat) houses two life-size statues of Narayan and Lakshmi. There is a Gadadhar or Lakshmi-Narayan temple at Uttarbahni also,

NARASIMHA TEMPLES

The Dogras are a manly people and as behoves such a people, they worship Vishnu in his Man-Lion or Narasimha incarnation also.

A reference has already been to the Narasimha temple in the outer *parikrama* of Raghunath Mandir, Jammu. There is an image of the god at Uttarbahni also, besides his temple near Mansar. But a much better known and more frequented Narasimha temple exists at Ghagwal, six miles from Hiranagar. The temple, on the side of a big tank, is not far from the national highway and the railway line.

Two big *melas* are held here, on *Janam Ashtami* and *Makar Sankranti*. The former lasts for about a week and the latter for three days. Both are largely attended. The number of people who visit it on *Makar Sankranti* is, however, much more. On this occasion people come from Bhadoo, Billawar and Ramnagar, bringing with them blankets, handicrafts and other products for sale.

The most interesting Narasimha temple in the province is found at Kough, a village about 8.5 kms from Mandli on the Dhar-Udhampur road. Situated at an altitude of about 2000 feet, the village commands a panoramic view of the territory around.

This temple is a most remarkable one. For it is the only one of its kind whose high priest is a Harijan. And there is an interesting and instructive story about it.

It is said that some centuries back there lived at Kough an honest weaver devoted to God. He was a Harijan named Suhaya. One day the local Raja gave him some cotton for spinning into cloth. The weaver who never refused any one anything when in need was approached by a *sadhu* for some cloth. The weaver

gave it to him. The Raja was enraged when he found the cloth short. He had the weaver put under detention and his weights and measures confiscated. When the blind mother of Suhaya came to know about it, she decided not to take anything till her son was back with his weights and measures. At night the weights mysteriously disappeared from the Raja's palace and were next day found in the weaver's hut. This inflamed the Raja still more and he sent his men to bring them back. But the basket in which they were placed became so heavy that they could not lift it. Not only this, they found them glowing brightly. When this was reported to the Raja he personally went to the weaver's hut but found that no one could lift the basket containing the weaver's weights and measures. He then asked the weaver to lift it. He could do so easily. This convinced the Raja that there was something supernatural about it and he returned the weights to the weaver and himself went away.

The weaver returned home happily, placed the mysterious weights on a pedestal and began to worship them regularly. The people in the neighbourhood, without distinction of caste, also started visiting his hut to offer worship.

But this was not to the liking of some caste Hindus as the weaver was only a Harijan. They represented to the Raja of Ramnagar, who perhaps held sway over the Bhadwal Rajas, and he ordered the weights to be got to his palace. But his men also found that they could not lift them. So Suhaya himself was made to carry them on his head.

The poor weaver would not take anything till he had offered worship to his new-found deities. But the hard-hearted Raja would not relent. All his supplications in this behalf were without avail. On the contrary, he was thrown out of the palace gate, where he lay without food and drink in bitter cold for three days. On the third day, however, the Raja had a dream at night in which Narasimha threatened him with dire consequences for having wronged his devotee. As he awakened from his dream, he suddenly fell down from his *charpai* and found the weaver's weights shining brightly. Alarmed, he sent for his astrologer and courtiers and asked them to interpret the dream. They all agreed that the weaver was a blessed soul and so his weights and measures should be returned to him.

The Raja acted upto their advice and not only restored his

weights to Suhaya but sent him back with his personal band (playing) in attendance.

The shrine enjoys high sanctity and every year a big *mela* is held here on the 13th of *Pausa*. This is attended by people from different parts of Jammu and Himachal Pradesh. Another *mela* is held on *Jyestha Poornima* when villagers, both men and women, sing and dance through the moonlit night and disperse only at dawn.

There is a temple of Narasimha at Ramnagar (2900 ft) which is situated about 65 miles north-east of Jammu. This is also a popular shrine and has a legend of its own.

It is said that a Brahman *pujari*, Dhruva by name, had to pay with his life for his zeal to offer the first lotus from the newly-dug tank on his land to the deity. The Brahman felt that he had the right to do so as the tank was built on his land but the Raja, apart from his kingly rights, claimed that he should do so as he had got the tank dug and planted with the lotuses. So when the first lotus flower appeared, Dhruva got up early in the morning, plucked it and offered it to his deity. This infuriated the Raja and he had him driven round the shrine by his feet till he gave up the ghost. Nemesis, however, soon overtook the cruel Raja who, despite penitence, including the erection of a temple with an image of Dhruva Brahman in it, soon had an inglorious end. A *mela* is held here on the third of *Baisakh*. There is a *baoli* near the temple known as *Navji ki baoli*.

According to some people the present Narasimha temple in the town was built by Raja Suchet Singh, youngest brother of Gulab Singh. Suchet Singh had got Ramnagar as *Jagir* from Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The image is stated to have been brought from the adjoining village Garlong, about two miles away. It was lying there by the side of the *Mansa-nullah*. The Lord appeared to Suchet Singh in a dream and asked him to carry the image to the town and build a temple over it. The Raja did so.

There are four other Narasimha temples in Ramnagar Tehsil: at Garlong, two miles from the town; at Dalsar, 3 miles from the town; at Khagot, 8 miles from the town on the main road; and, at Dhorte, 14 miles away from the town. The temple at Garlong contains a large *shila*. The *mela* is held on the 13th *Pausa*. The god is believed to grant offspring to barren couples. A *mela*

in the temple at Ramnagar is also held on *Ram Navmi*. The annual fair in the Khagot temple is held on *Ashad amavasya*.

All these temples are situated on high ground—from 2000 to 4000 feet—and contain *shaligramas*.

JAGANNATH TEMPLE

There is a Jagannath temple in Samba. Situated on the bank of the Badwani tank, about a mile from the old fortress, it is also known as the Badwani temple. It is a small temple constructed in the time of the ill-fated Raja Suchet Singh. The temple is an important social centre and people, without distinction of caste or creed, assemble here in the mornings and evenings.

There is another smaller temple by the side of Badwani tank. The temple situated at the northwest corner of the tank, was built by a poor Harijan (*Mahasha*) lady on the return of her adolescent son who had run away to Calcutta. Though poor she had pledged to do so if her son returned alive. He did and the poor mother went from door to door to raise subscriptions and got the temple built with the money so collected and her own meagre savings.

Badwani is believed to be derived from *Buddha-vani* (voice of the Buddha). Maybe in olden days, some great monk was residing here to deliver discourses on the faith.

HANUMAN TEMPLES

In view of the large number of Rughnath temples, shrines of his faithful attendant are but to be expected. A noteworthy Hanuman shrine in Jammu is the one at Purani Mandi. It is an open air shrine and the image of the monkey-god lies under a banyan tree. A huge image of the god is to found in the Rughnath temple on the left as you enter the inner shrine. There are images of the popular deity in the Panchvaktar and Purani Mandi temples also. As Hanuman is believed to confer boons and grant one's wishes speedily, images of the god have been installed in Jammu city and some other towns in recent years. Devotees flock to them in large numbers on Tuesday evenings. Hanuman temples or images have been put up on some roads and routes and these receive cash offerings from drivers and passengers to ensure safe travel.

BRAHMA IMAGES

Brahma, the third god of the holy Hindu Triad has no exclusive shrine of his own anywhere in Jammu province, though images of the god are to be found in the Rughnath temple, Jammu and the Gadadhar or Lakshmi Narayan temple at Uttarbahni. There, however, are a group of five peaks rising about 20,000 to 21,000 feet high to the northeast of Kishtwar which are named after the god. Some of these peaks, known as Brahma Peaks, are so steep that they are bare of snow while others are always clothed in it.

* * * *

There is no fire like passion, no shark like hatred,
no snare like folly and no torrent like greed.

Dhammapada

* * *
* *
*

BUDHA AMARNATH

LORD Shiva has cast his spell on people in this country from times immemorial. Representations of the god have been traced in the figurines on the seals unearthed at Mohen-Jo-daro (about 3000 B.C.), thus making him one of our oldest gods, if not the oldest of them all.

Shiva is associated with Truth, Goodness and Beauty and has his abode on the sublime heights of the snow-covered Himalayas. He is the Supreme God, without beginning or end, and therefore has his abode high up above all other gods.

One of the most famous *Shivasthans* is the shrine of Shree Amarnathji in Kashmir. It lies some 90 miles (144 kms) south-east of Srinagar in a natural cave at a height of 12,729 feet above sea level. The most distinctive feature about this heavenly abode is that it does not contain a man-made image. On the contrary, the sacred image in this shrine is *svayambhu* or self-made and is of ice. The image waxes and wanes with the moon. The ice-*lingam* attains its maximum height on *Sravana Poornamashi*, the full-moon day in August, when the annual pilgrimage to the shrine takes place and devotees from all parts of the country flock there to have *darshan* of the Lord.

The lure of Amarnath has cast such a spell on people in all parts of this subcontinent that thousands of them, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, take the hazardous trek to it every year. This is so not only now when the means of communication are highly developed and the pilgrimage takes but a few days. It was so in the past also when roads even in the plains were far from developed, the weather much more severe, and, as a consequence, the journey was much more difficult and dangerous. Those who came were not only people from within Kashmir but from beyond the confines of the valley also. So great was their attachment and devotion to it that when infirmity and old age, and, maybe unsettled political conditions, did not permit of undertaking the hazardous trek, they were constrained to find,—or others found for them—

alternative shrines nearer home. Thus we find two Amarnath shrines in Jammu province, at the foot of the mountains enclosing the Happy Valley.*

One of the Amarnath shrines outside Kashmir is at Makarkot, a tiny hamlet about halfway between Jammu and Srinagar on the National Highway. Makarkot is about 2 kms. from Ramban on the way to Kashmir. Here, by the side of a stream, cascading down a ravine is a huge rock that caves in, leaving a kind of depression in its bosom. In it collects water dripping from the ever-green grass overhanging the rock. Some of the water drops on a few small *Lingams* which have been placed in the pond of water. This is the shrine of Amarnath, to which the scanty population of the villages around go for worship, especially on *Poornamashi* and *Amavasya*.

Not to be beaten in their love for the God Immortal (Amarnath) the locals have named it *Budha Amarnath* (Old Amarnath), in contradistinction to the famous shrine of the same name in Kashmir.

MANDI AMARNATH

A much better known shrine than the one at Makarkot and which attracts a much larger number of people from far and near is the shrine of *Budha Amarnath* at Mandi in the Poonch area of the State.

Poonch lies to the north-west of Jammu and west of Kashmir from which it is cut off by the massive Pir Panchal Range. The shrine itself is about 15 miles to the south of Poonch town. The locality is known as *Rajpura Mandi*. The shrine is about 2 kms. above the Mandi village.

Like the Amarnath shrine in Kashmir, the shrine at Mandi attracts a large concourse of people from Poonch town and the other localities in Poonch and Rajouri Districts on the occasion of *Sravana Poornamashi*. Before partition many people came here from areas now under Pakistan's occupation.

Unlike the Kashmir shrine, the Poonch shrine does not lie on a high mountain. It lies in a lovely mountain glade, though at the foot of a high mountain which also is snow-covered for a number

* An Amarnath shrine was also in Muzaffarabad, now in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

of months in the year. Beneath it flows a stream or *nullah*, now called Loren stream, from the valley in which lies the shrine and the mountain that over-hangs it. It is easily approached by road.

The temple itself lies at the head of a massive *chakmak* rock about 300 ft. above the stream bed. The sacred image is in fact a part of this white rock. There is a spring near the shrine in which the pilgrims bathe before going into the temple.

One of the highways into Kashmir in olden times led past Mandi, Loren and Gulmarg. From *Rajatarangi*, the history of Kashmir written in the twelfth century A.D., we know that when some unlucky Kashmir prince lost at the hands of his rivals or enemies, he would take shelter in Loren and fight back to recover the throne with the help of the powerful feudal barons there. Once or twice the Loren potentate established control over the Kashmir Valley itself. Kashmir, rather *Tosa Maidan* above Gulmarg can be reached from Mandi on foot in two days, and in one day if a shorter but steeper route is taken. A *pucca* road is now under construction to connect the two.

The origin of the Amarnath shrine has an interesting story about it. It is said that once when political conditions in Kashmir were uncertain and the feudal barons there were engaged in internecine war, the Loren Maharani, Chandrika could not undertake her annual pilgrimage to Amarnath. A great devotee of Shiva as she was, this was too much for her. She felt very sad and dejected and gave up food and drink. Pleased with her devotion and austerities, Shiva appeared to her in the shape an old *sadhu* or ascetic with staff in hand. He told her that she could find Amarnathji $2\frac{1}{2}$ *kos* below Loren by the side of a stream. So on *Sravana-Poornamashi* she reached the spot accompanied by a large number of people and had *darshan* of the Lord. The royal procession was led by the *sadhu* himself who, however, disappeared while the rest were busy in worship. The Maharani and those accompanying her thought that the venerable old man was no other than Shiva himself and the shrine came to be known after him as *Budha Amarnath* (the old Amarnath).

According to local tradition, Ravana's grand father Plastya Rishi did his *tapasya* here and the Loren stream was therefore known as Plast stream.

The shrine is held in high esteem by Hindus and Muslims alike.

In fact the first shoots of grain from the fields are offered at the shrine.

Some miscreants, it is said, wanted to tamper with the shrine at the beginning of Dogra rule but most of them were carried away in a pestilence that swept the area. The rest had *yajnas* performed in atonement.

Another un-successful attempt to destroy the shrine was made in 1947 when some Pakistani invaders succeeded in reaching the place. They planned to dynamite the temple with the *mahant* inside it. But before their evil design could be carried out they were themselves carried away by a cannon fired by their own companions (according to one version) and by a mysterious lightning that struck them at night (according to another).

The pilgrimage to Budha Amarnath takes place every year on the occasion of *Sravana Poornamashi*, though people visit the shrine throughout the year. As in the case of the Kashmir shrine, the procession which starts from Poonch town, is led by a *Chhari* (Shiva's staff) which is duly worshipped at the local *Dashnami Akhara*, before the journey starts. A posse of Police offer the salute while the Police band plays. Thousands gather to witness the ceremony and accompany the pilgrims for some distance. The *Chhari* leaves on *Triyodashi*, reaches the shrine on the following day and the trek back begins after *darshan* and *puja* on *Poornamashi*. But most of the pilgrims now do the pilgrimage in one day i.e., on *Poornamashi* itself. The pilgrim traffic to the shrine is bound to increase manyfold when the road—now under construction—to connect Poonch with Kashmir via Loren, Tosa maidan and Gulmarg is completed.

A visit to the shrine is believed to be very rewarding especially for barren couples and those without employment.

SUDH MAHADEV

SUDH Mahadev, as the very name implies, is a Shiva shrine. In popularity it now ranks next only to the Vaishno Devi shrine. Like that famous cave shrine, it is also situated in idyllic surroundings. For sheer beauty of location, few other shrines can surpass it. It is situated on a green mountain spur at a height of about 5000 feet and commands a panoramic view of its surroundings on all sides.

Sudh Mahadev lies about 72 miles north of Jammu city in the District of Udhampur. To reach it we have to break off from the National Highway, connecting Jammu with Srinagar, at the 57th mile. A mile and a half ahead to the north we reach Chenani, a beautiful little town which was the headquarters of the Chenani *Jagir*. A further thirteen and a half miles, drive through a beautiful pine-clad hillside brings us to this great shrine whose origin goes back to dim antiquity.

The main shrine consists of a temple housing a *Svayambhu Shiva Lingam*, a black marble image of Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati, mounted on their Nandi bull and a huge *trishul* or trident of the Lord.

The shrine is believed to be very old while the first temple was built by a Chenani Raja over five hundred years ago. The temple also contains a *dhooni* (smouldering fire) to commemorate the spiritual attainments of Baba Roopnath who had taken up his abode in the temple soon after it was built. The Baba attained *samadhi* in the temple itself. The *dhooni* has been kept constantly burning ever since.

A big three-day festival is held at Sudh Mahadev on the occasion of *Jyestha Poornima* i.e., the full-moon day in June when thousands of people of Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of North India, particularly Punjab and Haryana, visit it for prayers and worship.

Before entering the temple the pilgrims have a bath in the waters of the holy Devika which flows nearby and intersects a part of the village. After the purificatory bath the pilgrims change their clothes and proceed to the temple raising slogans and singing

in praise of the Lord. Each pilgrim carries, besides offerings, a small bucket or pot of water from the stream which he pours on the *Lingam*. Flowers are then placed on the sacred image and incense burnt. Offerings in cash or kind are then made. The affluent perform *yagnas* and distribute *halwa* and *puris*. Some of those coming for the first time pledge offerings on a subsequent visit if their wishes are fulfilled.

The shrine is also visited in large numbers by people on *Shivaratri*, *Chaitra Chaturdashi* and *Baisakhi*.

The shrine of Sudh Mahadev is rich in legendary lore. According to one account, the place is so named after a great devotee of Shiva, Sudheet who, in a previous birth was a demon. His demoniac appearance once startled Shiva's consort, Uma, when he approached her to make obeisance. Frightened, a loud shriek escaped her lips. Hearing it, Shiva, who was in *samadhi* nearby, flung his trident to protect his beloved consort. This struck Sudheet fatally. As he was dying, he called out the name of Shiva again and again. It was then that the Lord realised that he had by mistake killed but a devotee of his. He offered to resuscitate him but Sudheet said that he could not have wished for a better fate than salvation at the hands of the Lord. Pleased with his devotion, Shiva decreed that his name should be pronounced before his own. Hence Sudh Mahadev.

The trident which struck Sudheet was broken into three pieces, two big and one small, which are installed in the temple. The local people believe that these go immeasurably deep into the earth, and woe betide the person who would dig them out, for, according to popular belief, he is bound to meet with disaster and even death. One of the pieces of the trident bears an inscription in *Brahmi* characters of the Gupta period.

The *Lingam* inside the temple is stated to be the one which Sudheet used to worship. And the black marble image of the divine couple is the discovery of a farmer who chanced to find it when tilling his field.

The temple building comprises a *pacca* two-storied structure. It has a number of rooms for the use of the pilgrims. The *Lingam* and the marble image are enshrined on the first floor while the three pieces of the trishul are installed in the verandah. The ground floor is occupied by the *samadhi* of Baba Roopnath.

The Devika stream flowing by the village has also a legendary origin. It is believed to have appeared in response to the *tapasya* and ardent prayers of Rishi Kashyapa, aeons ago at Budhisundh about three miles north of Sudh Mahadev. The Devak is believed to be an incarnation of the Ganga and equal to it in sanctity.

The importance of the shrine, as also its popularity and sanctity, are attested by the fact that a number of subsidiary shrines have grown around it. There is, for example, Mantalai, three miles to the north-east of the village where the divine couple is stated to have resided after marriage. There is a Shiva temple here. Another Shiva temple is at Banisund, two miles from the village. According to local tradition the divine couple is said to have been married here. Remnants of earthenware pots and clay utensils etc., can still be excavated here.

About two miles to the west of the main shrine, a little above the road between 9th and 10th miles, is the sacred *Gauri Kund* where Uma Devi used to take her bath when she was doing *tapasaya* in these woods for attaining the favour of Lord Shiva. Besides a temple of Parvati there is also an ancient stone temple with an old stone image of Shiv-Parvati resting on a lion. There is a Nandi bull near the steps leading to the temple. The Devika is believed to have its origin in Gauri Kund also.

Near the main shrine there are a temple of Durga, a *Go-Karan* temple, so named after its founder Raja Go-Karan, and a Satya-Narayan temple, built by a silversmith. The Durga temple built by a Chenani Raja over a hundred year ago was reserved for members of the ruling family only. But since the abolition of *Jagirs* in the wake of Independence, it is open to all. The Devi's image in it is said to have been brought from Sukral which itself is one of the most prominent Devi shrines in Jammu province.

The Durga temple lies above the *Papnashni baoli* or spring which feeds the Shiva temple as also the several houses in the neighbourhood. There are a number of other springs also whose waters are used by the inhabitants.

A visit to Sudh Mahadev enables one to combine devotion with pleasure. For the place is not only a place of pilgrimage but also a beauty spot and health resort. It is at a height of about 5000 feet—almost as high as Kud and Batote (which are not far away) and Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir. There are *sarais*

for the visitors who can also put up in the houses of the local inhabitants. Recently the State Government has constructed a *sarai* at a cost of over nine lakhs of rupees.

* * * *

Knowing the narrow limits of the brain,
 How can a learned savant be so vain,
 As to suppose that only he is right
 And those who differ are denied the light?

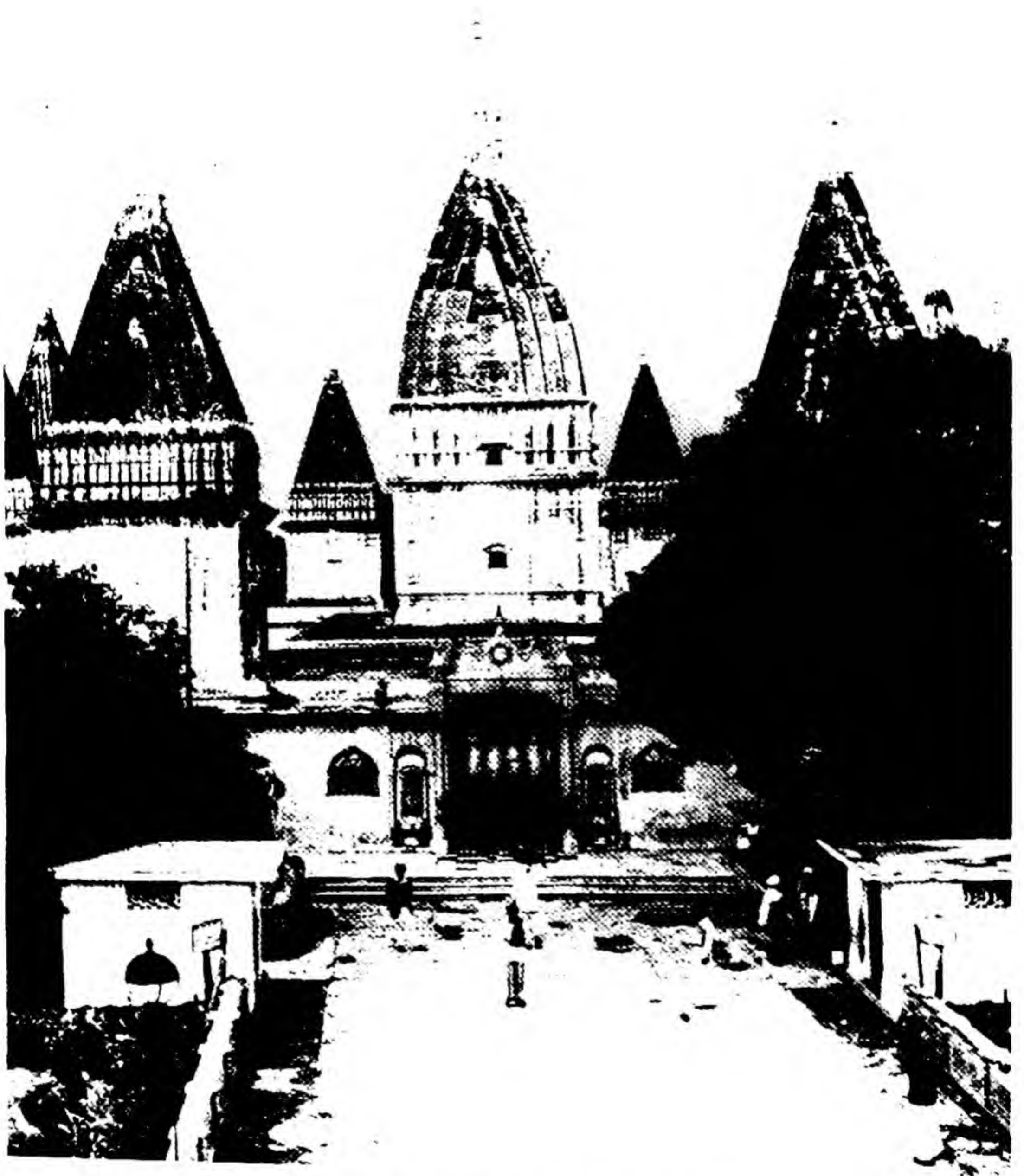
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Rughnath Mandir, Jammu. (Front view).



Lakshmi Narayan Temple (Barshala).



Rughnath Temple (Aerial view).



Crystal Ekadasa-Rudra in Ranbireshwara Temple, Jammu.



Sacred Image, Purmandal.



Ganesh and Karttikeya in Ranbireshwara Temple.

OTHER SHIVA SHRINES

NILKANTH MAHADEV

A NOTHER famous Shiva shrine is to be found at Basohli, a small town northeast of Pathankot. Overlooking the mighty Ravi, the town is 20 miles from Lakhanpur on the Pathankot-Jammu highway.

The temple was built by one of its greatest rulers, Raja Bhupat Pal, (1573-1635 A.D.) near his palace. It is known as Nilkanth Mahadev.

Basohli is a name well known in art circles; for Basohli paintings constitute a distinct school by themselves.

The Shiva-ling placed in the temple was the family deity of the Rajas of Kishtwar who worshipped it regularly. It was sapphire in colour. According to one version the image was of sapphire itself. It is said that on looking into it one could see one's image in the previous life. When the Rani of Kishtwar looked into it, she found a picture of a female monkey. Infuriated, she threw it into fire where due to heat it turned black. This brought a severe drought and terrible famine to Kishtwar for a number of years in succession; so much so that the people were constrained to leave their land of birth and seek their sustenance and livelihood elsewhere. When Bhupat Pal came to know about it he attacked Kishtwar and conquered it. He married the Kishtwar princess. He also got the sacred image and installed it at Basohli.

The shrine is highly respected in Basohli. People won't go back on their word if an oath is taken of Nilkanth Mahadev or a promise is made before him. Prayers offered before the deity always bear the desired fruit. Once when Kishtwar was stricken by drought and famine the local chieftain went to the shrine barefoot and prayed for rain. His prayers were granted and there immediately was a heavy rainfall. Even today if there is drought in Basohli, the people take the idol out of the temple, install it temporarily in the ground (*chaugan*) outside and offer prayers. This invariably brings rain. People regard Nilkanth as *Kul Devta*.

Nilkanth Mahadev is so highly regarded in Kishtwar that even

though the idol was taken away to Basohli the locality still has his shrine.

According to Hashmat Ullah Khan the original Nilkanth shrine in Kishtwar was set up by the *Mahabharata* hero, Bhimsen.

There is also a Gauri Shankar temple at Sarkote on the northern edge of the spacious *chaugan* in Kishtwar.

LINGESHWAR

There is a Shiva temple at Bhadrawah in which the idol is not placed on a *pranali* or pedestal but is on the ground itself. There is a local superstition that the *lingam* is sinking into the ground on which it is placed very gradually and that the world would come to an end when it completely disappears. The temple is known as *Gaya ka Shiv Mandir* and as *Lingeshwar*.

Shiva images are found all over the province. Three *Shivalingas* have been carved out of solid rock on the bank of the Chenab between Doda and Thathri (Barshala side). These usually remain submerged but emerge in winter when the water level in the river is low. They are worshipped by the villagers in the neighbourhood.

There are stately Shiva temples at Purmandal and Uttarbahni also but of those later.

MAHABILVAKESHWAR

One of the most revered Shiva temples is at Billawar, 22 miles west of Basohli and 32 miles east of Kathua. Formerly it was known as the Hari-Hara temple, but is now held especially sacred to Shiva. It is popularly known as the *Mahabilvakeshwara* temple, obviously because of the profusion of *bilva* trees all around. *Bilva* leaves, it will be recalled, are offered to Shiva in profusion, as the god is said to be highly pleased with this kind of floral offering.

The temple spire which rises about sixty feet over a square sanctum is profusely ornamented on the outside. It is divided into ten panels by ribbed courses, which are ornamented with flowers and floral scrolls. The spire has also a number of pedimental niches which contain figures of the gods etc. The temple faces west and has a *mandapa* behind it.

The temple contains a number of images including those of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva (five-headed) and a Ganesa and Bhairava.

Billawar temple is a majestic edifice, but in ruins. The gateway and the outer wall have fallen. Many chiselled and dressed stones used in the outer structures are lying scattered here and there, testifying that the temple must once have been a stately structure.

The township of Billawar is beautifully located on the slope of a wooded hill which has the *Naj nullah* flowing at its feet.

There are a large number of *baulies* around the temple area. Many of them are dilapidated, but there are some which are still in good condition. One of the *baulies*, still extant, is a large structure, beautifully constructed with well-dressed stones. It is an enclosed edifice with a gushing spring of cool, refreshing water in the middle. The *bauli* supplies water for ablutions and for offering to the temple deity. In fact on festival days, there are pots full of water outside the temple for the devotees to sprinkle on the *Lingam* inside.

Three-day fairs are held here on Shivaratri and Baisakhi. Both the fairs are attended by thousands of devotees.

ERWAN

There are a number of Shiva temples in and around the town of Kathua. The most famous of these is at Erwan near Parol.

The temple is believed to have been erected by King Vikramaditya in the fourth century A.D. According to another tradition the temple was erected by a legendary hero at Erwan, a township which he had built in honour of his wife Eraw. Shorn of the myth, it may safely be assumed that the town was named after the river Ravi, the ancient Iravati which flowed not far away. (Maybe it flowed near the shrine in those hoary days). According to *Nilamatapurana* Iravati too was possessed of religious merit. The ancient Kashmir text describes its water as holy.

As at other Shiva shrines, a fair is held at the place on Shivaratri. Another big fair takes place on Baisakhi when scores of shops and stalls spring up in the big mango grove around the shrine to cater to the needs of the participants.

There are a large number of *baolies* (101 according to one version) at the place in which the people, especially womenfolk,

take a bath early in the morning before offering worship in the temple. A bath in these springs on Baisakhi is considered very meritorious.

About 15000 people participate in the fair. As the fair comes at the fruition of the *rabi* crop, there is a lot of festivity and merry making and numerous *bhangra* parties, accompanied by drummers and flute players, enliven those come to join the fair. These dances are confined to the males only but women too witness them.

KAMESHWAR

Akhnoor town, 20 miles west of Jammu has also an important Shiva shrine. The temple is known as Kameshwar temple. It is beautifully located, with the Chenab flowing near it. The temple overlooks the river, which, it appears, must have flowed just beneath it in by-gone days. Even now when the river is in high flood, its waters reach the portals of the shrine.

MAHISHWARA MANDIR

Mahishwara Mandir in Samba town is also an historic shrine. It lies about a kilometre or so from the bazar on the left side of the road to Pathankot. It is an ancient shrine and an important place of worship for the people. The temple was built by the legendary Raja Sambh and was originally known as *Sambeshwar*. Sambh is believed to have been a son of Sri Krishna himself. He ruled at Dwarka.

Legends about Raja Sambh have already been given in connection with the *Chi Chi Devi* shrine. A different tradition exists in Kashmir. According to it, Raja Sambh was the son of Shri Krishna and is stated to have been mentioned as such in *Varahapurana*. One of the basic texts of Kashmir Shaivism, *Sambhapanchashika*, is attributed to him. The eleventh century Shaiva writer Kshemaraja, disciple of the great Shaiva philosopher-poet Abhinavagupta, has written a commentary on it in Sanskrit. Another Kashmir Shaiva savant, now happily with us, Swami Lakshman Joo, has rendered it in Hindi. He also mentions a folk tradition about Sambh's ailment. But the malady afflicted him in the stomach. When, however, it could not be cured by any

available treatment, his father advised him to worship Lord Shiva as manifestation of the Sun of Consciousness. He did so and was rid of his malady. In the process he left posterity a bunch of 56 verses of great beauty and high philosophy.

O Nanak, this alone need we know,
That God, being Truth, is the one Light of all.

Guru Nanak



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 Gadadhar Temple, Uttarbahni
 Vasaknag Temple, Bhadrawah

KASHMIR PROVINCE

Shree Amarnath Ji
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 Sharika Bhagawati, Srinagar
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SHIVA TEMPLES IN JAMMU CITY

RANBIRESHWAR TEMPLE

ONE of the biggest Shiva temples in the whole of north India is at Jammu. This is known as Ranbireshwar, after its builder, Ranbir Singh.

Everything about this magnificent temple is grand. It has a commanding situation on an elevated platform approached by three flights of steps. The temple stands in the midst of the extensive brick covered platform and commands a panoramic view for many miles in front. The temple opens on the west and overlooks the extensive Parade Ground to its east (in the north). The temple spire rises very high over a big hall which contains two pairs of eleven Shiva *lingas* (*Ekadasha Rudra*). One of these is made of crystal and the other of beautiful black stone. The biggest of the *lingams* of black stone is most impressive. It is about 7 feet high and is placed in a spacious *pranali*. All the Shiva *lingas* are placed in *pranalis*. In a niche in the back wall are beautiful marble images of Shiva and Parvati.

There are two side halls in which, embedded in cemented platforms, are thousands of *bana lingas* brought from the Narmada. According to the temple priests they number one and a quarter lakhs.

There are huge images of Ganesh and Karttikeya and a Nandi bull in the verandah in front. There is a Bhairava image in the compound.

The foundation stone of the temple was laid by Ranbir Singh in 1882 A.D. The *murtis* were procured from Jaipur and the *bana-lingas* from the Narmada. They (*murtis* and *lingams*) were received by the Maharaja at Ranbirsinghpura, and were brought from there in carriages. The Maharaja personally pulled the carriage assisted by his troops and thousands of other people.

The construction of the temple took two years. In the meantime the Maharaja had fallen ill. He therefore asked his brother,

Raja Ram Singh to perform the inauguration ceremony. But it appears that was not acceptable to the Lord.

In spite of the best efforts of Ramsingh and others the big Shiva *linga* could not be fixed up in the *vedi*. Consequently the Maharaja (Ranbir Singh) though ailing, came personally to the temple, prayed to the Lord and then with his own hands, helped by several other people, placed the *lingam* in the *vedi* amidst loud shouts of *Har Har Mahadev*.

A number of big panels about Shiva and Parvati have recently been painted on the walls of the temple inside and in front. These depict Lord Vishnu worshipping Lord Shiva and offering his eye in place of 101st lotus and the latter awarding him *Sudarshan-chakra*, Shiva drinking the poison resulting from the churning of the ocean (*samudra-manthana*), Shiva having *darshan* of Sri Krishna soon after his birth, Shiva destroying Kamadeva, Sri Rama worshipping Shiva before launching the attack on Lanka, and *Gangavaran*.

The temple is the venue of big fairs on the occasion of Shivaratri and Raksha Bandhan when its extensive garden and balconies are teeming with people.

There are a number of rooms below the temple for people to stay in. These are a boon to pilgrims visiting various shrines.

PANCHVAKTAR TEMPLE

Though Ranbireshwar temple is the grandest it is by no means the only one which enjoys high sanctity. The most revered Shiva temples in the city are those of Panchvaktar and Pir Khuh. Panchvaktar temple is perhaps the oldest temple to the god in the city. The Lord is worshipped here in his *swachhanda* form in which he is represented as having five heads. But the idol here is not five-headed. Instead there are five Shiva temples. But as against the huge idols in Ranbireshwar, the images here are very small. Large number of devotees visit the shrine daily. Their number swells to thousands on Shivaratri and Raksha Bandhan.

PIR KHUH

The Shiva temple at Pir Khuh is also very old. It is a cave temple in the side of the ridge which overlooks the Tawi. It has a beautiful location.

KASHMIRI PANDIT TEMPLE

A small Shivala or temple has been built near the Kashmiri Pandit *Bhavan* and *dharmshala* which is visited by large numbers of people during the *Navratras*.

RANBIR SINGH'S SAMADHI

There is a complex of eleven temples at Ranbir Singh's *samadhi* near the Jogi Gate cremation ground on the bank of the Tawi. Most of these temples have Shiva *lingas* in them.

There are *samadhis* of some other Dogra rulers or princes in the Rughnath Temple itself. The temples built over them are in a line as we enter the outer gate both on the right and left and some of them contain huge but beautiful Shiva *lingas*. The *samadhi* of Raja Suchet Singh is just outside the Old Palace, now housing the State Government offices.

* * * *

The axe cuts the sandal tree, yet the sandal perfumes the axe.

Guru Har Rai

* * *
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CAVE SHRINES

JAMMU can boast of a number of Cave shrines. The foremost among these is, of course, the shrine of Shree Vaishno Devi, (already described). Two other Devi shrines which are also located in caves are those of Pingala Devi and Manma Devi. The other cave shrines are those of Shiva. These are Shiv Khori in Reasi Tehsil, Pir Khuh on the bank of the Tawi in Jammu City and Visvesvara caves on the banks of the Ravi at Basohli.

SHIV KHORI

Shiv Khori is a natural cave in a hillock containing a self-made image of Shiva. It is a double-chamber cave. The outer chamber is quite spacious and can hold some dozens of people at a time. The inner chamber is somewhat smaller. The passage from the outer to the inner chamber is very low and narrow. At one spot it divides itself into two. One of these is believed to have led to Kashmir. It is now closed as some *sadhus* who dared it, never returned. The other passage leads to the inner cave in the centre of which is the *svayambhu* image of Shiva, about three feet high. The cave roof is etched with snake-like formations through which strike out some teat-like protuberances. Water drips through these latter on the Shiva *lingam* in the cave.

A fair takes place here on the occasion of Shivaratri. *Khori* means a *gupha* or cave. Shiva Khori therefore means Shiva's Cave. It lies about ten miles from Pauni, which is a village on the Reasi-Rajouri road. From Pauni the next stage Barkh is about 4½ miles. A further 2 miles brings one to Ransu, where the path to Shiv Khori branches off. The path involves a moderate ascent for about 4 miles. The hillock in which the cave lies is wooded and beautiful.

Previously the shrine was rather difficult of approach. But with the construction of a metalled road from Katra to Rajouri via Reasi it has become easily accessible from both Rajouri and Reasi

sides. It can also be approached by the newly-constructed road which branches off from the Sunderbani-Rajouri road to Kalakote at Siot.

PIR KHUH

Another prominent Shiva shrine housed in a cave is that of Pir Khuh in Jammu city itself. It lies on the eastern slope of the city a little above the Tawi bed. The cave temple attracts a number of people daily. Large numbers flock to it on *Poornamashi*, *Amavasya* and *Ekadashi*. Festivals are held on *Shivaratri*, *Magh Poornima* and *Sravana Poornamashi* (Raksha Bandan).

This is a beautiful little shrine with singular calm and peace especially in the evenings. The *lingam* is placed inside a small cave which has been lined with white marble slabs by the devotees. An evening spent here, especially on the platforms overlooking the Tawi, and commanding a superb view of the Bahu Fort is very rewarding. One's nerves are soothed and one returns from here at peace with oneself and the world.

After a bath in the Tawi early in the morning, one can have a glorious view of the sun-rise above the hillock which has the Bahu Fort as its crown.

The shrine is believed to be very ancient, like the Panchvaktar temple, not far away. According to some people it was erected by Raja Ajaib Dev in the 15th century A.D.

VISVESVARA CAVES

As we have already noted, Basohli is situated on a low spur over-looking the Ravi where it emerges from the mountains into the plain. The river here has a mighty span which is crossed over a steel rope in a box pulled from one side to the other. The river flows several hundred feet below the level of the town. There are a number of caves above the right bank. The most prominent of these is known as the Visvesvara Cave. The cave was so named after Raja Visva Raina, the reputed founder of Basohli (Visalaya), according to Ram Chandra Kak, who describes it as follows:

"The cave of Visvesvara is the largest excavation of the set and consists of two chambers, the outer one of which is 11 feet square

and 8 feet 3" in height. From the ceiling hangs a brass bell suspended from an iron hook embedded in the rock.

Admittance to the inner cave is gained by a low doorway in the northern wall. Its ceiling is slightly domed. In the middle of it is a Shiva Linga on a circular *pitha* carved out of the rock. There is a small marble image of Annapurna. The figure is 8-armed. Below it are a couple of other crude figures, one of whom seems to be a *Rakshasa* and the other a lion.

Below this cave is a large mutilated figure of a caprisoned bull. A few steps to the north of the bull is a rock in which has been excavated a small cave. This also contains a small *linga* on a *pitha*. On the wall forming the entrance are two figures, probably Shiva and his consort. On the left wall is the four-faced bearded figure of Brahma standing between two bulls. On the right wall are three figures: the central one is seated and probably represents Shiva, and the side ones are *chauri*-bearers, a male to the right and a female to the left.

On the face of the rock outside are carved two figures, one of Hanuman holding a mace, the other of Nandi.

A few more paces to the north is the figure of four-armed Bhairava carved on the face of a rock. In his lower right hand he bears an upraised sword, and in his left hand a mace and a trident. On the way down to the river are a few other caves carved out of sandstone rocks. One fairly well frequented is that of Sitala, the goddess of small pox."

A 6-foot human figure in the cave is regarded as the image of Vishwakarma, the traditional founder of all crafts and of the town of Basohli itself. Some regard it as the figure of Raja Bhupat Pal (1598-1635 A.D.)

NARAYAN KHORI

There is a cave shrine dedicated to Narayana in the mountain-side opposite to Suran-kot, on the road to Poonch. Known as Narayana Khori, the shrine is not much visited due to lack of easy communication.

Surankot is one of the handsomest valleys in Jammu & Kashmir. It is a broad expanse of greenery through which flows a rapid *nullah* coming from the mountains cutting off the valley from Thana Mandi.



Of an apple, by an apple, for the people

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LAKE SHRINES

KAILASH

THOUGH not so beautiful as Kashmir, Jammu has its own beautiful glades and valleys. One such is the rolling valley of Bhadrawah which is about 80 miles north-east of Jammu, as the crow flies.

Bhadrawah valley rivals Kashmir in scenic grandeur and salubrity of climate and is deservedly known as *Chotta Kashmir* or "Little Kashmir."

Bhadrawah proper is about 120 miles from Jammu and lies at the feet of the densely wooded Ashapati and Kailash mountains which remain snow-covered almost throughout the year. The locality derives its name from Bhadrakali, whose abode it was before she surrendered it to Vasuki when pursued by Garuda he begged her for shelter. There are a number of temples to the goddess in this locality even now.

Bhadrawah town is at a slightly higher level than Srinagar. About a dozen miles south-west of it is the mountain of Kailash. This mountain too is the abode of Shiva but it is different from the world-famous mountain of the same name which rises almost vertically from the holy lake of Mansarovar in Tibet. There is, however, a sacred lake on this mountain also. This is known as *Kailash Kund*, the lake of Kailashpati Shivji.

Spread over an area of one and half square miles, the Kailash lake is set like a blue sapphire in the midst of towering peaks covered with snow. There are a number of other lakes on the mountain. But the Kailash is the biggest. Its circumference is about a mile and a half. In early spring one might find ice floes floating on its surface while the peaks around and the clouds overhead are also white.

Local tradition has invested the Kailash Kund with great sanctity. It is said that in the dim, distant past when the animosity between the Nagas and Garuda reached a climax, the latter resolved to wipe

out the Nagas for ever. The Naga chief, Vasuki, took shelter in the fastnesses of the Bhadrawah mountains. But Garuda pursued him there also. Vasuki therefore sought refuge in the waters of the lake on Shiva's mountain. But Garuda was not to be outdone easily. He reached there also, and learning from Bhadrakali that Vasuki had taken refuge in Kailash Kund, he made a dent in one side of the lake and its waters began to flow out. Alarmed, Nagraj Vasuki prayed to goddess Saraswati, whose lake is higher up. His prayers were heard and waters from her lake began to flow into the Kailash Kund. Seeing the waters of the lake thus being mysteriously replenished, Garuda gave up and Vasuki heaved a sigh of relief. From Vasuki's residence in it, Kailash lake is also known as *Vasuki Kund*, or more briefly, *Vaskund*.

According to a slightly different version when Garuda reached Kailash and learnt that Vasuki had taken shelter in it he decided to drink off the waters of the lake. But as the waters of the lake were replenished from those of the lakelet higher up, he found he could not accomplish the task. So he rested a-while to take stock of the situation and plan his next move. It so happened that Sage Jimutvahana was performing his ablutions on the side of the lake. Finding the angry Garuda famished, he offered his own flesh to him for his meal, saying that this perishable body could have no better use. Pleased at this self-sacrifice, Garuda asked him to name the boon he would like to have and he would immediately grant it. He said Garuda should give up his hatred of Vasuki. He did so.

Kailash Kund is at a distance of about 15 miles from Bhadrawah town. Every year hundreds of devotees from Bhadrawah, Kishtwar, Ramban, Billawar, Udhampur, Himachal Pradesh and other places visit it on pilgrimage in the middle of *Bhadrapada*.

Some stay for the night at Sioj, a beauty spot, densely wooded where there are some huts for the purpose.

As in the case of the celebrated Amarnath pilgrimage, the procession of pilgrims to the Kailash is led by a sacred mace, or *Chhari*. It leaves Gatha early in the morning from the Vasuki Mandir there. At Nagar, two miles higher up in Bhadrawah town proper, other *yatris* join it. The *yatra* begins on *Bhadra triyodashi*. The procession comprises *yatris*, *chelas* (inspired disciples) and musicians with drums, flutes, bugles, twisted horns, gongs and bells.

Pilgrims processions come from two or three villages also. They too are headed by sacred maces. The pilgrims reach the lake by the evening.

There is no temple or *dharmshala* on the banks of the lake because the place is very high and subject to heavy snowfalls in winter. *Yatris* therefore put up underneath the rocks or in caves near them. They spend the night awake busy in *kirtan* and *bhajans* before the fires which are lighted to keep themselves warm. Fuel for these fires has to be got from lower altitudes as Kailash Kund is above the tree line and no trees grow there. The place is, however, growing so many aromatic herbs and there is greenery and grass all around. Next day, *Chaturdashi*, the pilgrims bathe in the waters of the lake from early in the morning. Some of them perform *shradhas* to propitiate the spirits of their deceased ancestors. Sometimes a snake appears on the lake surface. The devotees hail the snake with loud greetings of *Nagraj Vasuki ki Jai*.

The *Chhari* and many pilgrims return on this day. Some *yatris*, however, stay for this night also and return on the *Amavasya* after circumambulating the lake. Others trek to the densely wooded mountain glade, Sioj, where they encamp for the night in tents or under the trees. One can use a horse on this route.

The Kailash lake is beautifully located. The three peaks amidst which the lake snuggles present a fascinating sight when the first rays of the morning sun kiss them. So also when, bathed in moonlight, the rocks and stones strewn around the lake seem like *yogis* lost in eternal *samadhi*. The lake banks present an unforgettable sight on the night when the pilgrims are assembled on its banks and have lit up fires to keep themselves warm.

Kailash is at a height of nearly 13000 ft. above sea level and its peaks rise to more than 14200 ft. To reach the peak one has to rise up beyond the *Kund* and cross over blocks of ice and snow. There is another small lake, *Kali Kund*, at a distance of some three or four miles from the *Kailash Kund*. It is snake-like in appearance and frightening in aspect. On the other side of the mountain is another small lake called *Sheshnag* which is stated to be infested with snakes. Local people say that there are 108 lakes, big and small, on the Kailash mountain.

A number of streams have their origin in the waters of the lakes on the Kailash. These include the Tawi, the *Basantar* and the

Ujh, all crossed on one's way from Jammu to Pathankot and Niru, the river of Bhadrawah which falls into the Chenab at Doda.

There are a number of objects en-route which the devotees associate with Vasuki. Spherical stone pieces on a rock are believed to be his tear drops which fell from his eyes during his relentless pursuit by Garuda. A rock resembling a *sankh* is stated to be his conch shell. He is believed to have partaken of the edible grass growing at another place. The pilgrims also taste it.

Vasuki is the patron deity of Bhadrawah and on the occasion of Kailash yatra, the people of the town and surrounding villages are full of joy and enthusiasm. As the *Chhari* leaves the town it is accompanied by not only the pilgrims but also by the local people in large numbers up to the outskirts of the town. The atmosphere resounds with cries of *Nagraj Vasuki ki Jai* and the noise of gongs and conch-shells, besides the music of flutes, drums and bugles. The local people shower flowers petals on it and make offerings of rice and fruits and flowers.

On the occasion of *Kailash yatra*, there is a public holiday for two days in Bhadrawah to enable people to join the pilgrimage or welcome those come to their locality for the purpose.

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Attachmect is that which dwells on pleasure;
Aversion is that which dwells on pain.

Yoga Sutra.

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MANSAR AND SURINSAR

IN addition to the Kailash and neighbouring lakes in Bhadrawah, Jammu province has three more lakes. These are Mansar, Surinsar and Sanasar. The first two are rich in religious and historical associations. According to a legend these two lakes date back to the time of the *Mahabharata*. It is said that during their wanderings in exile, the *Pandava* brothers once sojourned in these parts and Arjuna disported with a *Nagakanya*, Alupi, whose beauty captivated his heart at the very first sight. Their meeting resulted in the birth of a son—Babruvahana—who grew up into a youth of great physical power. But Arjuna knew nothing about it. At the conclusion of the Great War, however, when the Pandavas performed the *ashvamedha yajna*, the horse released by Arjuna was held by Babruvahana near the site of the present lake (at Khoon). A battle royal ensued when Arjuna asked the youthful Babruvahana to let go the horse. In this fight the great Mahabharata hero was worsted. He fell down in a swoon.

When Babruvahan's mother heard of this, she hurried to the spot and admonished her son, telling him that he had killed his own father. The son was full of remorse and hurried consultations took place about how the dying hero could be saved. The consensus was that that could be done only with the help of a herb which grew in the nether world. Babruvahana therefore shot an arrow into the ground. The miraculous arrow pierced the earth, and picking up the life-saving herb on the other side of the planet, returned by a different passage with the herb at its tail end. Arjuna was thus saved and the two depressions created by the arrow's passage across the earth got filled up in course of time to make the two gem-like lakes of Mansar and Surinsar which shine like jewels on the bosom of Jammu.

According to some people the word *Duggar* for Jammu and its well-known derivative *Dogra* for its people are derived from the Sanskrit equivalent for these twin-pits, "Dwigarta".

These lakes are situated to the south of Udhampur. Though

less in extent than the lakes of Kashmir, they too are exquisitely picturesque. They were not much frequented till recently as they were not connected by metalled roads. But with the construction of the 120 kms Dhar-Udhampur road and the road linking the oil-drilling site along the bank of Surinsar, these two lakes, set against the backdrop of the outer Siwaliks, are attracting an ever-growing number of visitors every year.

MANSAR

The Mansar is a placid sheet of water, situated about 59 kms from Jammu City. The lake which is about three-quarters of a mile in length and half a mile in width lies amidst low hills. A 24-km road links the lake with Samba, a town about 25 miles from Jammu on the national highway. It is also connected with the Dhar-Udhampur road at Battal by a 7-km motorable road. The approach to the lake lies through beautiful hill territory.

The lake is surrounded by green forests of pine and mango. To enhance its beauty, Nature provides it with lotuses in profusion in summer. These are reflected in the waters of the lake which go down to a depth of about 58 feet and greatly add to its charm. The banks are, of course, shallower. The lake is a sweet water lake. Its water has been made available to the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages for drinking purposes.

Two ancient temples of Umapati Mahadev and Narasimha as also a temple of Durga are situated in the vicinity of the Mansar lake. People take a holy dip in the waters of the lake on festive occasions like *Chaitra Chaturdashi*, *Baisakhi* and *Shivaratri*. A big fair is held here on the sixth and seventh day of the bright fortnight of *Jyestha* (May-June) every year. On this occasion the place pulsates with life and activity. There are dances to the accompaniment of flute, drum and other instruments and the entire area reverberates with mellifluous notes of rhythmic folk songs. Wrestling matches and other revelries add colour to the festival. The atmosphere is one of mirth and gaiety blended, of course, with devotion.

Mansar fell in the domain of Raja Suchet Singh, the handsome young brother of Gulab Singh and he had constructed some big *sarais* on its banks for the facility of the pilgrims visiting the lake and the shrines on its banks. Their walls were profusely illustrated

with paintings depicting various religious and mythological scenes and anecdotes.

The lake enjoyed high esteem. Nobody would swim across it as that was considered sacreligious. Certain communities of Hindus would perform the *mundan* (first hair-cut) ceremony of their children here. It was also considered very auspicious and rewarding to circumambulate the lake. Newly-weds would go round it thrice to invoke the blessings of the *Nag-devta*, whose shrine is to be found on the eastern bank of the lake. The shrine comprises a big boulder on which are placed a number of iron chains perhaps representing small serpents waiting on the tutelary deity of the lake, Shesh Nag. The devotees worship here and make their offerings.

SURINSAR

The lake of Surinsar, situated about 8 kms to the west of Mansar, rivals it in loveliness and charm. This $\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{4}$ mile expanse of clear blue water of singular charm is an ideal picnic spot. It is 42 kms from Jammu city.

The motorable road-link between Jammu and Surinsar has been vastly improved since the Oil and Natural Gas Commission embarked upon the abortive drilling of what was purported to be the deepest oil well in Asia. The water of the lake is pale blue in colour. The soft greenery of the trees clustering its banks and the glorious turquoise crowns of the adjacent mountain ranges as also the blooming lotuses growing in it, are serenely reflected in its clear calm waters.

There is an islet in the middle of the lake. A beautiful little parlour built over it some years back has made it an enchanting spot especially in the morning and the evening when the rays of the rising and setting sun are reflected in the ripples raised on its waters by a gentle breeze.

SANASAR

The fourth lake in Jammu province is the Sanasar. It is one of the most picturesque spots in the whole of Jammu and Kashmir. Situated above Batote, it lies just below the topmost peak of the Patni-top range which is an off-shoot of the Pir-Panchal. The lake is formed by the waters which come down from the adjoining hill

sides. But now there is very little water in it. The lake bottom that has emerged and its sides are clothed in verdure of the most beautiful variety such as we come across at Gulmarg in Kashmir. The rest houses here command a panoramic view of the mighty middle Himalayas and the Zaskar ranges for miles together. The scene is most fascinating, especially in early summer, when the mountain tops in front are draped in snow.

Sanasar which may be called the Gulmarg of Jammu is bereft of religious associations. There are, however, a number of springs like Amar Chashma, etc., in the vicinity which draw people for their morning bath and ablutions.

Sanasar is now approachable by a good metalled road. It can be reached if one takes the route to the west from Patni-top on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway. It can also be reached by a bridle path from Batote. There are two good rest houses at the place.

Sanasar is lovely picnic spot, 130.0 kms from Jammu and 18.0 kms from Patni-top. There is a cafeteria and a couple of tourist huts at Patni-top which itself is a popular picnic spot on the national highway. A Youth Hostel is under construction.

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The earth supports even those that dig into her entrails;
even so bear with those that traduce you, for that is greatness.

Tiru-kural

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NAGA SHRINES

SERPENT worship has a very ancient origin and was rife in many countries of the world. Serpents figured prominently in the religious pantheons of ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Chinese and Japanese. In India serpent worship dates back to the time of the Indus Valley Civilisation i.e., 3000 years B.C. A number of seals found at Mohen-jo-Daro contain figures with hooded snakes at their backs.

Serpents or Nagas have been closely associated with the Hindu and Buddhist pantheons. There are references to Nagas in both *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, as also in the Buddhist sacred lore. The deadly *Naga Kaliya* was overcome by Shri Krishna. Shiva carries a cobra snake around his neck, like a garland. The snake is known as *Vasuki*. Vishnu reclines and relaxes on the thousand-hooded *Shesha*. In *Vishnu Purana*, he is described as the Lord of the Nagas.

Serpent or Naga worship has been extensively practised in many parts of India. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang and the Arab scholar Al-Biruni mentioned the existence of hundreds of places sacred to the Nagas in ancient and medieval Kashmir. Some of the Nagas, or springs in Kashmir are worshipped or revered still. There are even today a number of Naga shrines in the rest of India, especially in the south and Maharashtra, which attract thousands of devotees every year on the occasion of *Nag-Panchmi* (*Sravana Krishna Paksha Panchmi*) Snakes are carried in baskets, bedecked with flowers, and fed on milk at Sangli in Maharashtra on that day. The deadly cobra is even now regarded with some respect by the people.

While in other parts of the country Nagas were worshipped along with the other god and goddesses, in Bhadrawah Naga worship had, and even now has, precedence over the other gods and goddesses.

We have already seen how Nagraj Vasuki, fleeing from Garuda, came to Bhadrawah, which originally was the abode of Bhadarkali. The goddess taking pity on him, gave him her kingdom and herself took abode in the Kali Kund on the Kailash mountain.

VASUKI

Vasuki Nag or Wasak is regarded as the *Kula-devta*, tutelary deity of Bhadrawah. There are a number of temples and shrines to him, the foremost among them being those at Nagar and Gatha.

Vasaknag temple at Nagar occupies a foremost position in the town of Bhadrawah with the picturesque Ashapati mountain rising at the back.

The temple is a wooden structure and houses exquisitely carved images of Vasuki and Jimutvahana, who, as we have already observed, offered his own flesh to appease the infuriated Garuda.

The black-stone statues of Vasuki and his benefactor are about six feet tall. They are placed on an elaborately carved pedestal about two feet high. The images are life-like and exude grace and tranquillity.

Both of them are on the same platform. They seem to be identical, though a closer examination reveals some difference in height. Each of them has a halo of hooded snake over the head, as Vishnu in his recumbent state.

In fact in Bhadrawah people worship Vasuki as an incarnation of Vishnu. The images carry a *chakra* in one hand and a conch in the other. The two other hands of the four-armed figures rest upon two small figures, knee-high and resembling the deities in facial expression.

There is no knowing about who installed the images, who carved them and where they were made. According to the local people, the magnificent images have been carved out of the black marble available in the Munchdar *nullah* nearby. Though they look so fresh and life-like yet they are stated to have been sculpted many centuries ago. The wooden temples overhead can, however, not be so old. The images in the temple at Nagar are the best. It is said that the sculptors succeeded in creating them only on the third attempt. The results of their first two attempts were not so good. But they were not discarded, they were installed in the temples at Gatha and Nalti.

All Vasuki temples in Bhadrawah are built of wood, which is so plentifully available in the rich forests around. The triangular wooden sides taper off vertically in a *kalasha* formed of inverted pots of diminishing size placed one on the other. The main shrine

is reached by two flights of steps from the surrounding ground. There is a *mandap* in front of the shrine.

Fairs are held on *Baisakhi* and *Nag Panchmi*. The temples are visited by Hindus for worship and prayers on other festivals also. The people of Gatha claim that their temple is the original Vasuki Nag temple and that is why *Chhari* for Kailash starts from there.

The idols in the *Vasaknag* temples are covered on *Magh Sankranti* and for three months thereafter only the feet are visible and worshipped. The veils covering the images are taken off on *Baisakhi* day; during the interval *Vasuki* is believed to have gone to the nether-world.

SUBARDHAR

Though Vasuki is the tutelary and the most important Naga deity of Bhadrawah, he is not the only one to claim the allegiance of the local Hindu population. The other Nagas worshipped are *Subardhar*, *Mahal* and *Bhudar*. The people hold fairs and visit the Naga temples and offer milk, flowers, fruit, grain and coins by way of devotion.

Naga worship is prevalent throughout Bhadrawah Tehsil. There are Naga images or shrines in most of the villages. In the beautiful Bhelsa area, there is *Mahalnag* and in Chinta, *Subardarnag*. The latter is regarded as an incarnation of *Sheshnag*. His temple is about half a dozen miles from Bhadrawah town. A temple of *Chaturbhujnag* existed on the hill rising to the left of the Dak Bungalow but now the temple contains an image of *Satya Narayan*. There is a temple of *Takshaka Naga*, at Thuba, three miles from Bhadrawah on the way to Chinta, a picturesque glade. There is a temple of *Mahalnag* at Atholi or Aholi, (6300 ft) the chief village of Padar area of Kishwar Tehsil.

Every *Nag* has his *jatal* or *jatra* when people go to the Naga shrine in colourful processions and sing and dance and make merry. In fact Bhadrawah is known for these *melas*, locally called *Kudd* and the folk dance *Dhaku*, characteristic of them.

Naga worship has been prevalent in the Padar area also, which is known for its sapphire mines. According to an English writer "The people of Padar seem a good deal given to serpent worship,

they do not, however, separate it from observance of the rites of the Hindu religion." He refers to temples raised to various Nag-devtas or serpent-gods, which are adorned with wood carvings of snakes in many forms. He adds, "One of these temples is where there comes out a hot spring of considerable volume which has a temperature of 131°; bubbles of sulphuretted hydrogen escape from it. Here a bathing place has been built and *dharmasala* or resting place for *faqirs*."

NAGBANI

There is a Naga shrine at Nagbani, about eight miles west of Jammu. Devotees worship here on the day following Baisakhi, and sing and dance to the joy and entertainment of the people.

SURGAL BAWA

Kathua too has a Naga shrine known as Bawa Surgal; it is considered to be the home of snakes. The shrine mainly enjoys the allegiance of the scheduled castes though other Hindus also visit it. Mass prayers are offered once a week. The annual *mela* takes place on *Rishi Panchmi* following the *Nag Panchmi*. It is attended by thousands of people. Offerings comprise *lassi* of milk or curds, *atta*, sugar and cash. Usually a white snake appears on the occasion. There are mass prayers accompanied with the beating of drums etc. and dancing etc. by the *chelas*, who make predictions and prescribe remedies for people's ills.

There are some stones bearing Naga representations and some *jhundas* i.e. iron rods with a number of sharp iron pieces hanging at their ends with which the *chelas* beat their bodies (shoulders) when in frenzy or ecstasy. According to the popular belief, snakes and scorpions cease to appear after the Surgal Bawa's festival. The *mela* may therefore be looked upon as a kind of thanks-giving for the disappearance of these vermin.

Both in Kathua and Basohli Tehsil there were some hallowed spots considered to be effective in undoing the venomous effects of snake bites. These places known as *Manlik-sthans* have been sanctified by the residence of some saints and a little dust or clay from them rubbed at the place of the bite secures relief to the victims.

SURGAL DEVTA

There is a shrine of Surgal Devta in Udhampur town. Though set up only recently, it has achieved a high reputation. Prayers offered at the place are stated to have restored eye-sight to an 8-year old girl, the use of limbs to a boy crippled from his birth and speech to the 10-year old son of a local contractor.

KHARSAR DEVTA

There is a shrine of *Nag-devta* at Kharsar village about 5 miles by foot from Ramnagar town. Hundreds of people go there every Sunday to get a little water which is said to be effective in undoing the venom of snakes and scorpions. People offer *halwa* (pudding) to the deity. The snake is believed to touch it, after which it is taken by the people as *prasad*.

An interesting legend has grown around this shrine. It is said that once upon a time a woman gave birth to a girl and a snake. The snake was sent to the snake pen (*barni*) but he asked his parents to invite him when his sister's marriage was celebrated. This was done and the snake came with an ornament in his mouth, to offer as present to his sister. Next morning when people saw the snake they were scared and raised a hue and cry. More people gathered and began to pursue him. The poor snake ran for his life. Unfortunately he fell into the boiling rice water that had just then been drained from the rice cooked for the guests, and died.

The death of this innocent reptile did not go unpunished. People got involved in so many troubles and difficulties and all ascribed this misery of theirs to the death of the snake. The girl saw her snake brother in a dream and he told her that the people would get relief if they built a shrine for him. This the people did and got rid of their troubles.

LAKDOO DEVTA

A peculiar shrine in the areas between Banihal and Kishtwar I had heard about was known as Lakdoo Devta. This used to be a huge tree in the forest. But I could find no clue to the same. One day, however, as I was conversing with a friend* in a New Delhi

Mr. Akthar Nizami, M.L.A.

office he mentioned a "peculiar" shrine that had come up at Desa in the forest about two dozen miles above Doda.

There had been a huge tree at the place which was felled under the instructions of a forest contractor. Thousands of *devas* (earthenware lamps) were found under its trunk and roots. A huge snake appeared when the trunk was dug out. The snake was killed by the contractor's attendant. Next morning he too was found dead and the wooden contraption prepared for the passage of wooden beams developed an unmanageable fault. The contractor therefore came personally, made obsequies and offered a sheep or two in sacrifice. The water again started flowing in the flume.

Since then the spot has been properly enclosed and commands the allegiance of all. My friend told me that none dared speak an untruth at the shrine nor would one go back on his word given here. The place, he added, had attained the status of a *panchayat* or judge and people went there to settle their disputes on the basis of truth and fairplay.

In earlier times when these areas were exclusively Hindu, there must have been more such shrines, comprising aged forest trees. No one dared speak an untruth there and people went to them to make pledges and contracts and to ascertain and confirm the truth.

* * * *

When you do some act of charity, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing.

Jesus Christ

* * *
* *
*

SPRING SHRINES

THOUGH in Kashmir springs are usually associated with Nagas, this is not so in Jammu. But here also many springs are regarded as sacred. A number of these have already been referred to—including the spring issuing from the Vaishno Devi Cave, the Papnashi spring at Sudh Mahadev and the springs at Agral, Sukral, Ervan etc. The Basohli-Bhadrawah-Kishtwar belt situated at the feet of towering mountains is rich in springs. The two most important of these which are worshipped, are Gupt Ganga at the foot of the Ashapati mountain and Sun-Baoli in its bosom.

GUPT GANGA

Gupt Ganga, as the name itself implies, is a spring which has a mysterious or secret origin. It issues from inside a cave. The water from the spring is led through a pipe to fall on a Shiva Lingam, which has been installed in a spacious *pranali*. Both the idol and the pedestal in which it is placed are very beautiful. They too are made of black stone which the local people claim to have come from Munchder *nullah* nearby. Over them has been erected a handsome small temple which looks like a gem embedded in the mountainside.

Gupt Ganga temple nestles at the foot of the Ashapati mountain rising to about 9000 feet and stands on the bank of the Niru *nullah* coming from the Kailash Lake. The water from the spring also falls into this stream.

Gupt Ganga is a very picturesque spot which exudes peace and harmony. It lies nearly half a mile to the east of the Vasuki temple in Nagar i.e. Bhadrawah proper. To reach it one has to cross the Niru stream over a wooden bridge which, however, cannot take vehicular traffic. From the bridge one can view the Ashapati and Kailash ranges, as also the town of Bhadrawah.

According to a local tradition the Gupt Ganga shrine dates back to the time of the *Pandavas*, who are believed to have trekked to

Kashmir through an underground passage whose extreme end is now the cave referred to above. There is a stone by the side of the spring with a human foot-print. This is believed to be a foot-print of the Mahabharata hero, Bhimsen.

The temple had started falling into disrepair but an enthusiastic *Mahant*, Babu Ganga Das not only arrested its decay but converted it into perhaps the most pleasing spot in the whole of Bhadrawah town.

According to Ishrat Kashmiri, a well-known writer of Kishtwar, a tank just below Bandarkote bridge over the Chenab is also known as Gupt Ganga.

SUN BAOLI OR ASHAPATI

Ashapati is an ancient *tirtha* situated in the middle of the picturesque mountain of the same name to the south-east of the town. The *tirtha* which is at a distance of eight or ten miles from the town is a depression in the bosom of the mountain which is snow-covered. Underneath the snow is believed to be a spring known as the *Sun-bain* or *Sun-baoli* (from the Sanskrit *Suvarna-Vapi*). According to the popular belief, water issues from it but once in the year—(on *pitri-amavasya* i.e. the fifteenth day of the dark half of Assuj). On this day people of Bhadrawah and the neighbouring villages visit the place to take a bath in its sacred waters and offer oblations to their deceased kith and kin. The pilgrims processions are headed by sacred maces (*chharis*) as in the case of the Kailash Yatra.

After spending the night of *Amavasya* at the shrine the pilgrims return to Bheja village next day. A big *mela* takes place here on this day. People sing and dance throughout the night. Some pilgrims, however, return to Bhadrawah directly from the shrine and do not go to Bheja.

Like many other shrines Ashapati has its own legend. It is said that in by-gone times, Ashapati was a nice spring whose water was available to the residents of the village Bamlakhi, at the foot of the mountain and was the cause of their prosperity.

The spring was, however, known to but one old woman. One day she could not go to the place as she was indisposed. She therefore sent her daughter-in-law. When she got to the place she found a golden ball-like object swimming on its surface. She

tried to get hold of it, but in vain. Tired, she threw her scarf over it and rushed to her parents to seek their assistance in getting hold of the ball of gold. But when she returned she found the spring nowhere and its place taken up by a huge block of clay and snow. According to another version, when she returned there was a big landslide which buried her and the spring both. According to a slightly different version, the spring was enclosed in bricks of gold. (whence the name Sun-baoli or golden spring). When she tried to remove one of them the mountainside came down to bury her and the spring both.

According to still another version a certain Brahman used to visit the place mounted on his horse. Once the pious man was persuaded by his avaricious wife to bring her some of the golden bricks, but when he reached the place with this evil intent, he found the spring buried under snow, never to appear again.

TRISANDHYA

Like Bhadrawah, Kishtwar also abounds in springs and spring shrines. The most peculiar of these is that of *Trisandhya* which flows but intermittently and for only a short period in the year. The shrine is situated in the Dachhan-Marwa area, which is yet to be connected by a road and is difficult of approach. It is about two days' march from Kishtwar proper by foot. The spring is regarded as a miracle of Nature and a bath in its waters is considered very meritorious. Water appears in it thrice. It flows but as soon as it reaches the stream flowing a short distance lower down, it starts receding and goes back to where it had come from. There is no knowing when the water may start flowing, and as it flows for a few minutes only, people sit on its sides ready to jump in as soon as water appears in the spring.

A similar spring exists in Kashmir some two or three miles beyond the famous Kokarnag in Anantnag District.

GUMAI NAG

A number of springs are to be found in the Nagseni area about a dozen miles from Kishtwar on the way to Paddar. The

most renowned of these is *Gumani Nag* or *Gumai Nag*. It is regarded as sacred and worshipped. Goats are offered in sacrifice to stop drought or excessive rain and on the fulfilment of one's cherished desires. Pt. Shivji Dhar who has written the first history of Kishtwar (in Persian) has recorded that there was a stone with a hole in it on its side and that every Hindu family in the area offered a goat in sacrifice at its alter once a year. The hole never filled up even though about a hundred animals' blood flowed into it. Formerly the local people used to take their women for a bath in its waters at child-birth. This was believed to confer immunity on mother and child from disease and evil spirits.

There is a spring in village Saroor a bath in whose waters is stated to be helpful to barren couples.

Other springs in Kishtwar include *Humar Nag*, *Harel*, *Tila Machi*, *Pootnag*, *Mahalmag*, *Arhai*, *Kundali*, *Marpanyar*, *Damar* and *Gudrash*. The waters of the last-mentioned are supplied to the town as drinking water.

GAURI KUND

One of the most highly respected springs is that of Gauri Kund, about two miles west of Sudh Mahadev. Gauri or Parvati is believed to have meditated and offered penance here for 12 years to obtain the favour of Shiva.

The sacred Devika issues forth from a deep cave here.

RAM KUND

A well-known shrine in the Mendhar Tehsil of Poonch District is that of Ram Kund. The shrine which is stated to date back to the time of the Mahabharata is about 11 kms from Mendhar. Eight of these can be covered in a vehicle but the remaining three have to be done on foot. There are three springs or tanks. The *mela* takes place on the first of the bright half of *Chaitra* when people go there to have a bath.

SACRED TANKS

There are a number of sacred tanks, adjacent to some temples, such as that of Narasimha at Ghagwal, 6 miles from Hiranagar

and of the Devi at Phinter on the Dhar-Udhampur road, where a ten-mile road branches off to Billawar. A bath in the latter is considered very efficacious in the removal of rheumatic pains. The tanks at *Sidh Swankha* and *Chambaliyal* are referred to later.

SACRED BAOLIS

Reference has already been made to the Papnashi baoli issuing just beneath the Durga temple at Sudh Mahadev. Its waters were so highly regarded that they were believed to wash off one's sins.

About a dozen miles from Rajouri, some distance up the mountainside, on the way to Thana Mandi is another sacred *baoli* which enjoys high sanctity in these areas. This spring known as *Liranwali-Baoli* (well of clothes) or *Lha-wali-Baoli* (well of the gods) is believed to contain water coming from the famous Sun spring at Mattan (Martand) in Kashmir.

This spring is visited on Sundays and during the intercalary month that is added to the Indian Lunar calendar every two and a half years.

AGAR JITOO

Agar Jitoo, a few miles beyond Katra on the road to Reasi, is the birth-place of a *Kisan*-martyr, Bawa Jitoo. There are a number of water-shoots issuing from the hillside. A bath in their waters is considered very beneficial for barren couples and those suffering from various illnesses.

SUNARA

Sunara is a picnic spot east of Jajjhar Kotli on the national highway which reputedly contained a hundred springs. Hence the name.

KHOON SPRING

There is a beautiful spring with crystal clear water at Khoon—50 kms. from Udhampur not far from the Dhar-Udhampur road.

Its water is hot in winter. A number of ascetics put up here. The main temple is of Shiva.

HOT SPRINGS

In addition to the springs mentioned already, there are a number of hot springs in different parts of Jammu province. The waters of these are known for their medicinal properties and people with rheumatic pains and stomach and skin ailments resort to them for bathing in large numbers.

The hot springs in the Kishtwar are all locally called *Tattavani* while those elsewhere are called *Tattapani*. The water of a hot spring in the Padar area is so hot that one cannot dip his hand in it. It is said that rice placed in a piece of cloth in it gets boiled. So hot is the water. The *Tattavani* spring in the Nagseni area is only about 22 kms. from Kishtwar town. It is situated on the bank of the Chenab and emerges into open only in winter when the water level in the river is low. Bubbles of sulphuretted hydrogen escape from it. The *Tattavani* near Atholi in Padar is sometimes referred to as *Sheshnag*. The hot springs in the Merv-Wardwan area of Kishtwar are, however, not so hot.

Hot springs are found at Tattapani in Mendhar Tehsil, on the right bank of the Poonch river. They too are said to have valuable medicinal properties.

There are two hot water springs in Gool-Gulabgarh area also. A bath in their waters is stated to be very efficacious for the removal of skin diseases. Hundreds of people therefore visit them every year. The number is fast growing with the construction of the road to Sanghaldhan from Ramban. The springs situated in a beautiful mountain-girt glade, are nearly six miles from Sangaldhan.

But the most frequented hot springs are near Kalakote at a little distance from the Reasi-Rajouri road. They are two in number and are visited in winter months by large numbers of people, especially Gujjars who make offerings, after getting their heads clean-shaved.



Shiva-Parvati *tete-a-tete*. (Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu).



Shiva-Parvati Image, Sudh Mahadev.



Shiva Temple, Gupt Ganga, Bhadrawah.



Visheshwara Caves, Basohli.



Budha Amarnath, Mandi (Poonch).



Temple Complex, Purmandal.



Dancing Shiva, Babor.



Nandi Bull, Uttarbahni.



Kirmchi Temples

RIVER SHRINES

RIVERS and streams are a source of life and prosperity. They provide water for our drinking, bathing and washing. They irrigate our fields. Their waters enable us to do so many other things, from the cooking of our meals to the construction of our houses. In ancient times, when means of communication were not developed, they provided the quickest means of transport. Even now they are perhaps the cheapest means for transportation of goods and merchandise. And whereas in the past they only ran our primitive watermills and water-wheels, today their waters are harnessed to yield vast quantities of power to light our homes and keep the wheels of our industries turning.

Rivers are in fact indispensable to us. It would not be an exaggeration to say that human life on earth would be impossible without rivers. Little wonder therefore that the rivers have enjoyed sanctity in many countries of the world. In our own country they have been worshipped. In the *Rigveda*, the rivers are regarded as deities and spoken of as purifying the worshipper physically and spiritually. Many of them continue to be worshipped by the people to this day.

The foremost among India's rivers and one which receives homage from people in all parts of the country is, of course, the Ganga. But there are others like the Krishna, Kaveri, Godavari, Narmada, Yamuna, and the Vitasta (Jhelum) which too are regarded as goddesses and receive worship at the hands of the people.

Two of Panjab's great rivers Chenab and Ravi pass through parts of Jammu Province. But as their courses lie largely through un-inhabited and inaccessible territory, their waters cannot be made much use of. Even so the confluence of the Chenab (or *Chandrabhaga*) with the Marwa river coming from the north, at Bandarkote, about half a dozen miles north of Kishtwar, is a sacred spot visited by the people of Kishtwar town on the occasion of *Baisakhi* for a purificatory bath. People bathe in it also at

Reasi and again at Akhnoor (20 miles west of Jammu city) where it finally emerges into the plains. The *Nilamatapurana* says that the "great" river Chandrabhaga is always holy everywhere, but is especially so on the thirteenth of the bright half of *Magha*.

According to the ancient text, the river is a form of the great Ganga herself and is so called because it was released by the moon-god Chandra by tearing away locks of hair on Shiva's forehead. The first of *Bhadoon*, known as *Sangh (Simha) Sankrant*, draws large numbers of people to the river at Ramban. They have a bath and make floral offerings to it. The Ravi (ancient *Iravati*) too is a fast-flowing torrent through inaccessible terrain till it reaches the plains at Basohli where people bathe in it on the occasion of Baisakhi and other festivals.

TAWI

The Tawi, a tributary of the Chenab, has the city of Jammu on its banks and people bathe in its waters on Baisakhi and other holy days. Many people, including old ladies, even now flock to its banks every morning for bathing and *sandhya* (ablutions).

The Tawi is called *Surya Putri* or the daughter of the Sun-god. The *Nilamatapurana* describes it as holy and one which pleases the sun. In Jammu there is an interesting story about its origin.

It is said that in the far distant past when Nagraj Vasuki held sway over the lands around Jammu he fell seriously ill. When no treatment availed, he was advised that only a purificatory bath in the waters brought down from the Himalayas would afford relief. This was a Herculean task but to accomplish it he hit upon a clever plan. The *Nagaraja* had a numerous progeny—dozens of children and grand-children. He announced that he would abdicate in favour of the prince who would bring down a river from the Himalayan heights. The princes at once set upon this well-nigh impossible task but success eluded most of them. The efforts of only two bore fruit. One of them was able to get the Chenab down to Akhnoor but as Vasuki was too ill to move to the place he could not make use of its waters. The other one named Bhair or Bhaind, who had gone to the Kailash mountain (in Bhadrawah) brought down the Tawi from the Kali Kund by removing the rocks and boulders that held back its waters.

BHAIR DEVTA

Bhair was accordingly deified and is worshipped at a place about a dozen miles upstream (the Tawi) from Jammu. The stream here is full of big fish and devotees feed them with small balls of kneaded flour. Milk is also offered.

The Tawi, which passes through varied territory, is a low stream except during rains when it gets flooded and turns red from the red clay washed down from its banks. It joins the Chenab in Pakistan-held territory about a dozen miles south-west of Jammu city.

* * * *

One cannot cleanse one's conscience by bathing and rubbing one's body:

For the attainment of spiritual bliss, one must realise one's *atma* and bathe in it as in a stream.

Mian Ghambir Chand

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DEVIKA

BUT there is another river—rather stream—named *Devak* or *Devika*, which is very highly regarded. In the estimation of the local people it challenges comparison with the great Ganga itself.

The Devika is referred to in the *Mahabharata* and the various *Puranas*. According to the *Nilamatapurana*, the ancient Kashmir text, the river is an incarnation of Uma. And whereas people's sins are washed away by a bath in the holy waters of the Ganga, the mere sight and touch of Devika's waters do it: thus says the *Devi-Mahatmya*. Even the gods and goddesses are said to flock to the Devika for purification and spiritual merit. No *japa*, *tapa* *yajna* or sacrifice is needed here; a bath is enough to secure spiritual merit and even *moksha*. Cremation on its banks is as meritorious as on the banks of the Ganga at Varanasi. Immersion of the ashes of the dead in it (at Purmandal or Uttar-bahni) is considered as good and rewarding as at Hardwar.

The Devika rises in the mountains near Sudh Mahadev and takes a southerly course. It disappears and re-appears at a number of places. Near Udhampur, the second most important town in the province (about 40 miles north of Jammu city on the national highway) where it re-appears is an important shrine with two ancient Shiva temples and a huge *Nandi* bull. Many people come here everyday to bathe in its holy waters; their number swells to hundreds on festivals like *Shivaratri*, *Raksha-bandan* and the *Chaudish* of *Magha* and *Chaitra*. The number of devotees is particularly large on the occasion of Baisakhi when a big three-day festival is held. On all these days it is considered very meritorious to pour the sacred waters of the stream on the Shiva-lingas in the temples. The devotees also visit the *Bajrangbali* temple put up in recent years.

The Devika is credited with a divine origin, like the Vitasta (the Jhelum) in Kashmir. The origin of this river is also ascribed to the prayers and penance of Kashyapa. Pleased with the sage's

tapasya, Shiva asked his consort Uma to appear in the form of a river for the benefit and salvation of the people. The loyal consort did as asked, but requested her lord to be always near. Accordingly Shiva appeared in the form of eight *svayambhu lingams* along its banks after his consort had taken rise from the Gauri-kund near Sudh Mahadev. In course of time these developed into shrines, the first of these being at Sudh Mahadev and the second at Udham-pur.

According to another version, the Devika owes its origin directly to Parvati's intercession with her Lord. Taking pity on the sad lot of the people of *Madra-desh* (the land between the Ravi and the Chenab) she pleaded with him on their behalf. Shiva said that they deserved little as they did not so much as bathe even. But Parvati was not to be easily deflected from her resolve. Ultimately Shiva agreed on condition that she too would make some sacrifice i.e., that she would take rise as a river for their sake. She would not agree at first but was persuaded to do so when Shiva assured her that he would take up his abode along its banks.

Though now practically dry for the greater part of the year, the Devak appears to have been a much bigger river full of water in ancient times. That explains the existence of a number of well-known shrines along its banks. The most important of these are at Purmandal and Uttarbahni.

PURMANDAL

MOST of the Shiva-lingams that automatically arose following the rise of the Devika are in and around Purmandal which is the most important shrine on its banks. These, apart from Umapati-Shiva, were those of Indreshwar, Bhuteshwar, Gayaeshwar, Kashe-shwar and Bilkeshwar.

Purmandal is a small village about 39 kms. from Jammu towards its south-east. It enjoys high reputation as a *tirtha* and is sometimes referred to as *Chotta Kashi*. This small hamlet lies on both banks of the river, separated by the sandy bed. The main shrine is the temple of Umapati and adjoining to it are a large number of Shiva temples in rows, big and small, which make an interesting pattern. The temple spires rise up a in beautiful cluster and shine brightly in the sun.

There is little water in the river. Though now almost dry except during the monsoon and torrential rains, its sandy bed is drenched with water. People therefore scoop out holes and pits in its sands. These get filled up with water with which the people bathe and perform their ablutions. There is also a deep well inside the masonry wall of the temples whose water is used for drinking purposes and for pouring on the deity which here has a representation of a big metallic snake around it.

The Devika is believed to have appeared on *Phalguna Chatur-dashi (Krishna paksha)* i.e., *Shivaratri* at the end of *Dwapara yuga*. Great importance therefore attaches to a bath in its waters on *Shivaratri*. Another big fair attended by thousands of people takes place on *Chaitra Chaudish*.

The rediscovery of the shine is closely connected with Kashmir, the fountain-head of Shaivism. The building of the first temple is ascribed to a Kashmir king, Raja Veni Dutt (probably Vinayaditya or Avantivarman who ruled from 855 to 883 A.D.). It is said that the place was then overgrown with a dense forest. But a neighbouring villager's cow would every day come to the place, stand over the *svayambhu* image, when milk from her teats would automatically

drop on the sacred image. The villager was at a loss to know as to what happened to his cow's milk. One day he followed her to see what happened. He found that his cow's milk that flowed from the sacred image collected in a depression and was taken by a she-jackal. Enraged, he shot the poor animal. The arrow struck her in the head and she died on the spot. It is believed that simultaneously a daughter was born to Raja Veni Dutt. But she had a chronic headache. When all treatment failed to cure the princess of her disease, the Raja turned to the astrologers. They told him that the princess in her earlier life was the she-jackal who was shot at Purmandal. The Raja therefore hastened to the place to pray at the feet of Umapati and to make offerings to the god. His prayers were heard and the princess got rid of her chronic illness. The grateful Raja got the first temple built over the image of Umapati.

According to a slightly different version of the legend the she-jackal was killed by the arrow of a hunter and as she fell on the sacred image, she achieved salvation from her animal state and was born as a human being.

Whatever the truth of the legend, there can be no doubt about the fact that Purmandal has a hoary past and that the shrine has always enjoyed high sanctity and great renown. Guru Nanak is among the luminaries who visited it. His visit took place during a fair on his return from Kashmir and some other parts of Jammu province towards the close of the second decade of the sixteenth century. The Moghul emperor Akbar's great general, Man Singh is also known to have visited it after his conquering expedition to Kabul. He had pledged to construct a temple if he returned successful. He redeemed the promise on return. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Lion of the Panjab, was greatly attached to the shrine. He came on the occasion of *Chaitra Chaturdashi* and remained here for three days on all of which he bathed in the waters of the Devika and gave lakhs of rupees in charity. This was in April 1838 A.D. He made golden offerings to the deity and had a *dharmshala* constructed for the convenience of the pilgrims.

Ranjit Singh was accompanied by Gulab Singh, who later on became the founder of Jammu & Kashmir State. Gulab Singh got a large number of Shiva temples constructed from the gold which his master had offered at the shrine.

Gulab Singh's son Ranbir Singh was also greatly devoted to

the place. He visited it a number of times. Fredric Drew, a Britisher who was in the Maharaja's employ for about a decade from 1826 A.D. accompanied his master on one of the pilgrimages. The Maharaja was accompanied by a large entourage, including all his courtiers.

Drew's description shows how in essentials the place has changed but little during the past hundred and ten years. He describes Purmandal as a place situated in a nook among the low hills, far up one of the ravines that drain down to the plains and the temple complex as "a strange collection of buildings strangely situated, a double row of lofty and handsome buildings with naught but the sandy stream bed between them. There was a chief temple with a fine facade, and behind that numerous domes, one gilt one conspicuous; most others are houses built by courtiers of Ranjit Singh, who was attached to this place and occasionally visited it".

Drew continues: "The whole place was alive with people who had come to bathe and worship; booths and stalls, as for a fair, had been put up in the middle of the sandy place; the picturesque buildings backed close by sandstone rocks, and the crowds of cheerful pilgrims, made a gay and pretty scene. It is only for a short time after rain that a stream flows over the sands, now they had to dig two to three feet to reach water, numbers of holes had thus been made and the people scooped up enough water to bathe themselves with; the atoning power of such a ceremony is considered in these hills to be second only to that of a visit to Hardwar."

* * * *

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UTTARBAHNI

A FEW kilometres beyond Purmandal and about 43 kms from Jammu by road is Uttarbahni, another great shrine or *tirtha* on the sacred Devika. The place is so called because the river here takes a sudden turn to the north. There are a number of magnificent temples here, built by Ranbir Singh.

At Uttarbahni the Devika has got some water in it, specially opposite the main Gadadhar temple in which people bathe and perform their ablutions. In *Chaitra* particularly, people flock here every Sunday to take a bath. They also come on festival days like *Chaitra Chaudish*, and the solar eclipses. Performance of *shradhas* here is considered as meritorious as at Gaya. The ashes of the people cremated on the banks of the Devika at Purmandal and Uttarbahni are not taken to Hardwar for immersion, they are allowed to mingle with the sand here.

Maharaja Ranbir Singh and his son and successor, Partap Singh, both were greatly devoted to this shrine, as also to Purmandal. They converted the place into a great centre of devotion and learning. A *pathshala* on the lines of the Sanskrit Vidyalaya in the Rughnath Mandir, Jammu, was set up. Hundreds of students from Jammu and elsewhere studied here under capable scholars, some of whom had been brought from outside the province. A *goshala* was also put up.

The Dogra rulers' attachment to Uttarbahni begins with the founder of the dynasty, Gulab Singh, himself. It is said that when he was in the employ of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Gulab Singh happened to come here once with the intention of hunting. But he was warned against this by a *Mahatma* or sage who appeared to him in a dream. Gulab Singh obeyed and it is said that the sage foretold that he would become the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir. The foundation of the Gadadhar temple is sometimes ascribed to him.

The Dogra rulers, especially Ranbir Singh, had some of the sites traced out where *Shiva Lingas* had automatically appeared at

the birth of the river Devika. He had temples built over those sites. Of the three temples extant at Uttarbahni, the one in the best state of preservation is that of Gadadhar or Lakshmi-Narayan.

The temple enclosure is rectangular and has a number of rooms on its sides. Some of these were used for residential purposes by the students studying in the *Vidyalaya*. On the fourth side, facing the temple is the gate which is flanked by verandahs containing images of Gayatri, Savitri and Saraswati, a three-headed Brahma, Hanuman and Ganesh. There are also images of *Dashavataras* i.e. the ten incarnations of Vishnu, including those of *Varaha*, *Narasimha Machhavatar*, *Kachhavatar*, and *Vamana* and of Vishnu and Parshuram. The roof of the temple is gilded. The temple is a very soothing place exuding peace and tranquillity.

A little to the north-west of the Lakshmi-Narayan temple across the sandy river-bed is a big Shiva temple. The temple has outside it a massive and magnificent white stone Nandi bull claimed to be the biggest in north India and a huge bell weighing about 25 maunds. The temple is sometimes referred to as *Abhimukhteshwar*.

The temple is in a state of deterioration. Already the outer gate and some of the rooms in the parapet wall have been submerged by the sands washed down by monsoon rains. The sands have also engulfed and completely obliterated the temples of Gayeshwar and Kameshwar put up by Maharaja Veni Dutt of Kashmir over 1100 years ago.

The third temple which lies at a distance of about a kilometre from the Shiva temple has a commanding aspect like the Ranbireswar temple in Jammu city. Situated on a hillock it also houses *Ekdasha Rudra* i.e. eleven Shiva Lingas besides images of Sri Rama, Sita and Lakshman. Ranbir Singh is believed to have got this temple built on high ground so that the flag over it could be seen in Jammu. The temple which was begun by Ranbir Singh was completed by his son and successor, Pratap Singh.

SAINT MARTYRS' SHRINES

BAWA JITOO

JHIRRY is a tiny hamlet about a dozen miles west of Jammu lying close to the Indo-Pakistan border (the line of actual control). This sleepy little village comes alive for a brief five or six days when tens of thousands of people from neighbouring villages and Jammu and from Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh flock to it to pay homage to Bawa Jitoo, a *kisan*-martyr.

Bawa Jitoo lived some five hundred years ago. Born in a Brahman family of limited means, he hailed from the village Agaar lying between Katra and Reasi. The village lies at the foot of the Trikuta hill below the shrine of Shri Vaishno Devi.

Jitoo, or Jit Mal, to call him by his full name, was a great devotee of the goddess. But great devotion entails trials and tribulations to prove it. Jit Mal was no exception. A cruel fate deprived him of his wife early in his life. He had but one child, a daughter named Bua. His collaterals were hard on him and deprived him of his patrimony. He therefore left his ancestral village and came to Shama Chak near Jhirry which was then a barren waste. Nothing daunted, and with faith and courage abounding, he determined to turn this barren waste of bush and boulder into a garden of smiling fields of corn. He came to know that the land was held by one Mehta Bir Singh. He approached him and got his permission to till it on the stipulation that one-fourth of the produce would go to him while Jitoo could keep three-fourths for himself. Apparently he had thought that the Brahman peasant from Agaar would be able to take out but little from the barren waste. But in this he was proved wrong.

Assisted by a Harijan attendant, Leghaso, Jitoo applied himself to the task heart and soul. He cleared the land of bushes and boulders, levelled and ploughed it, sowed the seed and nursed the crop properly. In the course of a few weeks only the erstwhile barren tract of land was a smiling field of grain. People in the

neighbourhood were surprised. The happiest among them all was Jit Mal, who, denied his due by his kith and kin, had been richly rewarded by God Almighty for his hard labour.

When the crop was harvested, Jitoo approached Bir Singh and asked him to take his share of the produce. The latter who had expected but little from his barren waste was also very pleased. He accompanied the god-fearing peasant and finding a big heap of wheat before him, he insisted on taking three-fourths of the crop as against one-fourth only agreed to earlier. The latter protested, but in vain. The rapacious landlord ordered his men to carry off three-fourths of the grain. This aroused Jitoo's indignation. In protest he struck his sharp sickle into his bosom, and bleeding profusely jumped on the heap, declaring that Bir Singh could take his blood also with the wheat. Jitoo's death struck terror in the minds of the landlord, his attendants and family members. They got the wheat thrown into the neighbouring Chenab river.

Bua Rani, Jitoo's infant daughter, and Leghaso, his faithful servant committed suicide when they learnt about Jitoo's self-immolation.

Bir Singh and his family feared the worst as a consequence of this *brahma-hatya* (murder of a Brahman). They left their home town for good but even so they were afflicted with various diseases, etc.

Jitoo's self-sacrifice against the rapacity of a landlord cannonized him in the eyes of the people who began to flock to the place on *Kartika-Poornima* to pay homage to the kisan-martyr. A beautiful *samadhi* came to be erected in his memory and Jitoo came to be known as *Bawa*, or saint.

Jhirry has since become a prosperous crop yielding area and peasants who come to pay homage at his *samadhi* offer rice and *dal* (for *khichri*), besides cash. As his daughter had hardly entered her teens, they offer dolls in her memory at a pond nearby known after her. Its waters are said to cure people suffering from boils and other skin diseases.

The main function at Jhirry takes place on *Kartika-Poornima*, but the fair begins two days earlier and lasts for five or six days in all. Over a lakh people visit the place, many of them from beyond the confines of Jammu province. Descendants of all those who were responsible for this triple tragedy, believe that they must visit

the place with offerings on the occasion of the fair, as otherwise, they feel, they would come to grief.

Jhirry fair is a typical people's fair and synchronizes with similar fairs in different parts of the country. Apart from paying homage to the great kisan-martyr, the fair affords village people of all castes a welcome opportunity to come together. A big *bazar* springs up at the place, which is enlivened with devotional singing and dancing, beside wrestling bouts, tug of war, *kabadi*, etc. There are merry-go-rounds for the children and film shows and other entertainment programmes. A cattle fair and crop competitions are also held.

BUA BAGAN

Jammu province has produced another great martyr whose heroic selfsacrifice has won her the status of a saint. She also sacrificed her life in protest against the rapacity of a cruel landlord. Named Bua Bagan, she is believed to have lived about 500 years ago. Her *samadhi* is situated in village Therakalwal on the Dhar-Udhampur road, about 8 miles from the beautiful picnic spot of Mandli.

Bua, a Brahman lady, had some agricultural land which was tilled by Harijan farmers. Once the local *jagirdar*, at the bidding of his overlord, the ruling chieftain of Badhu, announced an increase in the farm rent. Bua thought this was far from justified and asked her tenants not to pay at the enhanced rate but as before. When the *jagirdar*'s men came to collect their share of the grain, the poor Harijan tenants refused to pay at the higher rate. They were arrested but pleaded innocence as they were acting in accordance with the instructions of their landlady. The revenue collectors therefore went to her place, taking the arrested tenants with them. Bua was a bold and fearless lady. When she came to know about it she came out of her hut, confronted the revenue collectors with the words: "Why have you taken hold of these poor men? They have acted as I had instructed them". One of the collectors therefore proceeded to take hold of her. Bua Bagan warned him not to come near and threatened that she would kill herself rather than be taken prisoner. But finding the collectors closing in upon her, she thrust her sharp sickle into her bosom,

and bleeding rushed into her hut and set it on fire. She thus burnt herself together with her small daughter.

This created a sensation all over the place as the killing of a Brahman was considered an unforgivable sin in those days. The Badhu Raja got scared and immediately withdrew his cruel order. Even so he fell seriously ill. He consulted astrologers and others about what he should do in atonement and erected a *samadhi* as counselled.

Therakalwal fair is celebrated every year in June in memory of this brave lady who laid down her life in protest against the rapacity of a feudal chief. She is respected by people of all castes and communities. The peasant families of the area attend the fair in colourful dresses to pay homage to and place wreaths on the *samadhi* of this lady martyr.

SIDH SWANKHAH

A heroic tale, lacking historical basis, has grown round the shrine of Sidh Swankhah in the Samba Tehsil of Jammu District. The place is known after the *Jogi* Sidha Gauria who lived and died here. Sidh Gauria was a disciple of Guru Gorakhnath and his *samadhi* by the side of a tank here is the venue of an annual fair held on the first Sunday of *Ashad*. People believed to be possessed by evil spirits are brought here, for a bath in the tank is said to cure them of their malady.

The legend that has grown around this shrine relates to the fifties of the fifteenth century A.D., when Jammu was ruled by one Raja Ajaib Dev. His son Bairam Dev was an exquisitely handsome prince whose beauty became known far and wide. It is said that he was sent for by the Muslim ruler of Delhi who was highly impressed with the youthful prince and treated him with great affection. The princess too fell in love with him and the king offered to give her in marriage to him. But the Jammu prince did not like the idea as marriage would mean his conversion. But he dared not reject the royal proposal outright on the spot. He therefore said that he would consult his uncle about it. The uncle who had accompanied the prince, was immediately sent for. The uncle, a shrewd person, pleaded for time to enable him to bring round his nephew to do the king's bidding.

The uncle was as opposed to the king's proposal as the nephew. But he knew that it would be the death of both of them when the king was apprised of their decision. So he hastily sent the prince away and was himself cruelly done to death at the king's command. According to a slightly different version, the prince was also caught and beheaded to the great grief of the Muslim princess who committed suicide. It is said that in course of time a child appeared at the grave of the ill-fated princess and it was this child who was brought up by Sri Gorakhnath and came to be known as Sidha Gauria.

As already stated, the legend lacks historical basis. But it is very popular and is the subject matter of some popular poetic compositions in Dogri which are recited by local bards on the occasion of the annual fair.

CHAMBALIYAL

This place is also in Samba Tehsil, in the Ramgarh sector very near the Indo-Pak border (line of actual control). The place is known after one Bawa Ajit Singh Chambaliyal whose headless body is stated to have fallen here some hundred years ago. According to some people the shrine was originally the residence of a great *pir* who was a contemporary of Sidha Gauria. It attracts people of all faiths every Tuesday and Sunday as the water of the well and the soil are considered very effective in curing *chambal*, a kind of skin disease and in undoing the baneful effects of evil-spirits, *djinns* and demons. A big *mela*, lasting four days is held in honour of the saint every year between the 7th and 10th of *Ashad*.

The shrine is held in high esteem by villagers on the other side of the border. The sacred soil and water is supplied by our Jawans to the devotees on the border and the offerings made by them are received and returned after due offering at the shrine.

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JAIN TEMPLE

Jammu has a scanty population of Jains too. They numbered just 1150, according to the Census of 1971. Most of them—as many as 1111—were in Jammu city itself.

The Jains are mostly in business; some of them in commanding positions in trade and commerce.

They too have a temple containing images of the various *Tirthankaras*. The temple was an inconspicuous building in Patel Chowk in the heart of the old city. But they have now been transferred to a beautiful small marble temple built next to it. The images include those of Lord Mahavira and the other *Tirthankaras*. They are all of marble.

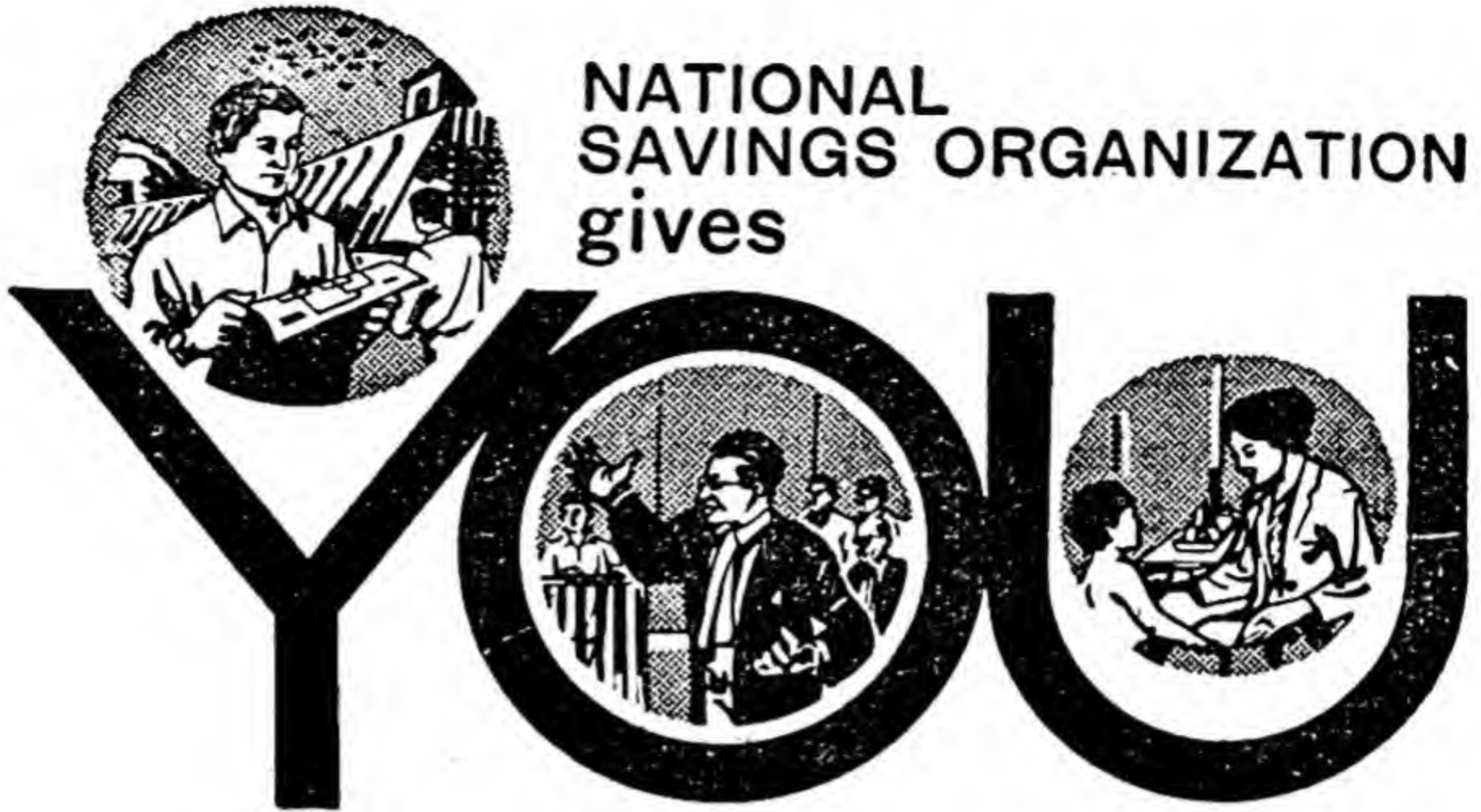
The image of Lord Mahavira has been brought from Cambay near Ahmedabad. It is believed to have been discovered 1100 years ago. The temple took four years to construct and has cost Rs. 2.5 lakhs.

Radhaswamis have a prayer hall near *Shahidi Chowk* on the Residency Road which is now called *Vir Marg*. Meetings are held on Sundays.

There is a *Ramakrishna Ashram* on the road leading to the Canal where meetings are held. There is a Library and Reading Room too. Another *Ramakrishna* foundation is at *Tiloo Talao*. The ascetic in charge is a Kashmiri Pandit popularly known as *Shaktiji*.

Poonch and Jammu a *Gita Bhawan* each and Udhampur a *Sharika Bhawan*.

The Arya Samajists have their own meeting places.



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BUDDHIST GONPAS

JAMMU province has but a scanty population of Buddhists. Nearly all of those permanently settled in the province are residing in the Paddar area of Kishtwar. The total number of Buddhists who live mostly in the villages of Tun, Kaban, Lovsen and Hanguhalot is hardly 1000. They resemble the Buddhists of Zanskar which adjoins Paddar and is separated from it by a high mountain range. Parts of Paddar were once included in the Zanskar Tehsil of Ladakh District and the Buddhists of Paddar villages take after their cousins across the mountain range. They resemble them in dress, mode of living etc., and speak the same *Bodhi* language. Their mode of worship is the same. There is, however, no big chapel or monastery. But each of these villages has its own small *gonpa* containing sacred images. Pillars inside the *gonpas* are adorned with beautiful images of the Buddha and other luminaries of the faith. The sacred texts are kept in a wooden box.

The Paddar area of Kishtwar was till recently almost cut off from the rest of Jammu province, despite the fact that it contained perhaps the only sapphire mines in the country. It was very difficult of access and subject to heavy snowfalls. Few people therefore dared to go there. But despite its inaccessibility and severe climate some officials had to visit it on duty. And for the corrupt among them the local people had devised an ingenious and interesting method of fund raising.

When a dead body was carried to the cremation ground the villagers en-route made cash offerings to it. These were deposited with a person who enjoyed the respect of the community. When the corrupt official came and demanded bribes, he was given part of the offerings to the dead and entertained out of it. The corrupt officials were thus considered deserving of what was offered to the dead only.

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SIKH SHRINES

GURDWARAS

THE Sikh faith appears to have come to Jammu in the life time of its founder. It has already been noted that Guru Nanak visited a number of Jammu shrines, including Purmandal and Sarthal on return from his extensive tour of China, Tibet and Kashmir.

During the five centuries after his death, the faith has found many followers in Jammu and Kashmir. In fact, after the Hindus and Muslims, the Sikhs are the third most numerous community in the province of Jammu. Most of them are concentrated in Jammu city itself. According to the Census of 1971 the city accounts for nearly 32% of the thirty-one thousand and odd Sikhs living in the urban areas of the State. Accordingly there are a number of Sikh shrines in the province; most of them in Jammu city itself. Two well-known *gurdwaras* are to be found just near the Rughnath Mandir—one in the Rughnath Bazar and the other just below it. There are three or four others in different parts of the city. A few new ones have also come up, especially in the newly built colonies. The most important of these is in the Gandhi Nagar area, in what is now known as the Nanakpura. It is a spacious structure, very well laid out.

There are *gurdwaras* in most of the towns. Udhampur has four of them. The one in the city itself runs a school also. Another pretty little one has been put up at Garhi, 7 kms. from the town, by M.E.S. and Army personnel. In fact Army and M.E.S. personnel have put up temples and *gurdwaras* side by side at a number of places. Two multiple shrines comprising a temple, *gurdwara*, etc. have been put up on Jammu-Srinagar and Jammu-Rajouri roads at the most dangerous spots which were notorious for accidents. Buses and cars stop there to enable the driver and the passengers to make cash offerings.

GURDWARA NANGALI SAHIB

One of the most famous *gurdwaras* in the province is in Poonch, a principality to the north-west of Jammu which for long struggled to maintain its separate entity but was ultimately merged in J & K State when its enlightened prince, Raja Jagat Dev Singh, breathed his last in the early forties of this century.

Sikhism appears to have come to Poonch in the time of Guru Arjan Dev, who was a contemporary of Emperor Jehangir. He is believed to have sent some *pracharaks* to this locality, which lay on one of the most frequented medieval routes to Kashmir.

The fifth Guru, Arjan Dev's son, Guru Har Gobind, personally visited Poonch when he went to Kashmir. The tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, who founded the *Khalsa Panth*, sent a number of *pracharaks* to Poonch and Kashmir. In course of time they appointed others, including Baba Rocha Singh who died at Rawalakot in 1803 A.D. at the ripe old age of 115 years. He was followed by Sant Bhai Mela Singh. It was he who established the well-known Gurdwara Nangali Sahib, which is perhaps the most revered of the *gurdwaras* in the province of Jammu.

The Sant was highly respected and the *gurdwara* not only commanded the allegiance of the Sikhs, but was respected by Hindus and Muslims also. In fact much land was allotted to it as *jagir* by the local chieftains of different faiths. The income from these was utilised to run a free *langar* (kitchen).

This *gurdwara* is still very highly respected. Its *mahant* has always been a bachelor. Meat and wine are not permitted within its premises.

The *gurdwara* is about 5 kms. from Poonch town in the village known as Santpura. A big *diwan* is held here every Sunday which is attended by a large number of people.

The Khalsa MLHS School at Jammu and a big *ashram* at Digiana, Jammu, are ascribed to this *gurdwara*.

There are a number of *gurdwaras* in Poonch town.

BIBI CHAND KAUR SAMADHI

An important Sikh meeting place in Jammu city is the *samadhi* associated with Bibi Chand Kaur, wife of Kharak Singh, eldest son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. It lies below Gumat, adjoining the cremation ground, known as *Jogi Gate*.

Kharak Singh ascended the throne on the death of his illustrious father in June 1839 A.D. But he was an imbecile and possessed none of his father's great qualities. He passed away only about a year after in November 1840.

Nau Nihal Singh, his son from Maharani Chand Kaur, was to succeed to the throne. But when he, together with Udham Singh, son of Gulab Singh, was returning after performing the last rites of his deceased father, both of them were killed when a stone archway suddenly collapsed and fell down on them.

Sher Singh who also claimed to be a son of Ranjit Singh, now asserted his claim. Having enlisted the support of Dhyian Singh, brother of Gulab Singh, he wanted to ascend the throne and asked Bibi Chand Kaur, who had taken up abode in the Lahore fort, to surrender. She would not agree. Supported by Gulab Singh and some other nobles, she assumed to herself the functions of ruler or regent. She spurned Sher Singh's proposal for marriage. Sher Singh therefore decided to wrest the throne by force. He attacked the Lahore fort where the Rani had repaired. But the attempt was foiled by Gulab Singh who put up a heroic defence.

Ultimately a settlement was negotiated under which the Maharani was to surrender and give up her claim to the throne. "In return for this, Sher Singh was to give the ex-queen a *jagir* of nine lakhs of rupees adjoining the Jammu hills, which should be managed by Gulab Singh, as her regent." Syed Muhammad Latif, historian of Punjab, adds, "Raja Gulab Singh carried away all the money and valuables belonging to the Maharani under pretence of keeping it safely for her. The night after the treaty was signed, the Dogra forces vacated the fort. Raja Gulab Singh carried off the accumulated treasures of Ranjit Singh which were in the fort." According to Dr. K.M. Panikkar, biographer of Gulab Singh, "sixteen carts were filled with rupees and other silver coins, while 500 horsemen were each entrusted with a bag of gold *mohurs*". With this vast treasure he returned to Jammu.

Sher Singh who was a voluptuary and a libertine had this beautiful but unfortunate lady killed by her maid-servant. Bibi Chand Kaur's *samadhi* adjoins the Khalsa M.L. Higher Secondary School, below Gumat. *Gurpurabs* are held in the extensive grounds in which it is located.

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DERA BABA BANDA

ABOUT nine miles from Reasi and fifty-seven kms. by road from Jammu towards the north-west lies an imposing shrine dedicated to the memory of one who, to use the words of a modern Sikh historian, "shook one of the most powerful empires in the world (the Moghul Empire in India) to its very foundations with such violence that it was never again able to re-establish its authority". He was *Banda Bairagi*, also known as *Banda Bahadur*.

Banda hailed from a middle class family of Rajouri, a beautiful small town about 166 kms north-west of Jammu. The child was christened Lachman at his birth in about 1670 A.D.

Rajouri was an important stage on the Moghul route to Kashmir. Even before the time of the Moghuls it had intimate connections with Kashmir. It was then known as Rajapuri.

Lachman was an intrepid youth who soon acquired mastery in the use of bow and arrow and other weapons. But he was kind-hearted too. So much so that once when he had hunted a pregnant doe (from whose womb issued three off-spring) he was so overwhelmed with a sense of guilt that he not only gave up his martial pursuits but turned a *bairagi* (wandering ascetic). He was then barely out of his teens. The place where the incident took place is still known as Harni after the *hiran* or female deer that was the victim of his arrow. It is halfway between Mendhar and Surankot on the way to Poonch.

After ordination Lachman got a new name Madho Das. Possibly he became a disciple of some hermit known as Madho and declared himself to be Madho's *das* i.e., faithful follower or servant. After visiting various shrines and hermitages in north and central India, Madho finally settled at Nanded on the banks of the Godavari in the south. Here he set up an establishment of his own in which he lived for about fifteen years.

The times he lived in were turbulent. The decline of the Mughal Empire had already set in and the bigotry and dissensions that were to bring about its collapse had already raised their ugly

head. The Sikh *Gurus* were the special targets of the Moghul rulers' fury.

The persecution of Sikh *Gurus* which began with Jahangir (he had ordered the execution of the fifth *Guru*, Arjan Dev) reached its culmination in the reign of Aurangzeb when the ninth *Guru*, Teg Bahadur was executed. *Guru Gobind Singh*, the tenth *Guru*, was only nine when his father (Teg Bahadur) was put to death in November, 1675 A.D. He too was not left in peace. His two elder sons were murdered and his own life was saved by two Pathans he had known earlier. But soon after his other two sons were also done to death under orders of Wazir Khan, Moghul Governor of Sirhind. In vain were his attempts to secure redress against this dastardly crime by the Moghul Governor. On Aurangzeb's death in March 1707, he sought redress from his successor, Bahadur Shah, and with a band of trusted men followed him when he turned towards the Deccan to suppress the rebellion of his brother. But again in vain. It was during this period that the *Guru* and his followers arrived at Nanded. But he was not destined to live long. He was stabbed by two Pathan youths and passed away some time after, on October 7, 1708.

Banda was a contemporary of *Guru Gobind Singh*, having been born only four years after him. But it was at Nanded that he came in contact with *Gobind Singh*. They soon became intimate. The *Guru* was highly impressed with his devotion, courage, and qualities of leadership and when he decided to send some one back to Punjab to rouse the people for a struggle in the event of the failure of his efforts for redress, his choice fell, not on the old and trusted disciples that he had with him, but on Madho Das, even though their friendship was only recent.

The *Guru* appears to have made a powerful impact on Madho. He not only accepted the mission entrusted to him but declared himself to be a faithful follower or *Banda*. He therefore came to be known as *Banda Bairagi*.

Banda was charged with the duty of punishing the men who had persecuted the Sikhs and murdered his sons. He was in the neighbourhood of Delhi when the sad news of the master's death reached him. The whole of north India was seething with discontent against the discrimination and maladministration of some of the later Moghuls. So when the news of *Guru Gobind Singh's*

death became known, people began to flock to Banda's camp. In a short time only Banda became the spearhead of a widespread movement against the persecution and bigotry of the rulers. Sirhind was captured. There was much carnage and bloodshed in which Wazir Khan was also killed. And before long he was the virtual master of the territories between the Yamuna and the Chenab. From *Banda Bairagi* he now came to be known as *Banda Bahadur*.

But his glory was not destined to last long. Soon after the Emperor's return from the Deccan he was forced to withdraw and seek refuge in the foothills of the Himalayas. It was during this period that he spent a year or so in the small village of Thanaur which has since come to be known after him as *Dera Baba Banda*. He could not remain here for long as duty claimed him elsewhere. He came down from his mountain retreat to give a final fight to the Moghuls who had thrown a cordon around him. Despite mounting difficulties Banda held out for long. He finally laid down arms on an assurance by the Moghul Commander that he would intercede with the Emperor on his behalf and he and his followers would be spared. But this assurance was not kept and the very person who gave the assurance got 200 of his followers executed immediately. The remaining, including Banda and his family were put in chains and sent to Delhi where they were murdered after cruel torture.

Before execution Banda was offered pardon if he renounced his faith. But this he would not do even though he was ordered to behead his son. Banda's heroism evoked the admiration of his enemies even. Writing about the Mughal victory over Banda, a contemporary chronicler, Kanwar Khan says: "It was by grace of God and not by wisdom or bravery that this came to happen". He acknowledged that Banda and his followers were "starved into surrender".

The village Thanaur where Banda lived for a year has a *gurdwara-cum-samadhi* dedicated to this heroic personality. The village now known as Dera Baba Banda is nearly a dozen miles from Katra on the way to Reasi. It is not on the main road; one has to descend some distance to reach this attractive spot by the Chenab river. The *gurdwara* contains, besides his ashes, some of his personal effects and arms, including his large sword.

The *gurdwara* is believed to have been built by Banda's great

grandson over the hut in which his great ancestor resided. The walls of the building are painted, and, among others, bear portraits of the Sikh Gurus and Banda and scenes from the life of Sri Krishna.

A *beri* tree in the *gurdwara-cum-samadhi* is held in high esteem as Banda is believed to have meditated under it.

Banda's supreme heroism has inspired a poem by Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore. Entitled "*Bandi Bir*" (Captive Hero) it deals with the execution of Banda and his son, Ajay. The great poet presents "the episode as a tale of heroic fortitude in which an individual makes an incredible sacrifice for the faith and honour of his people."

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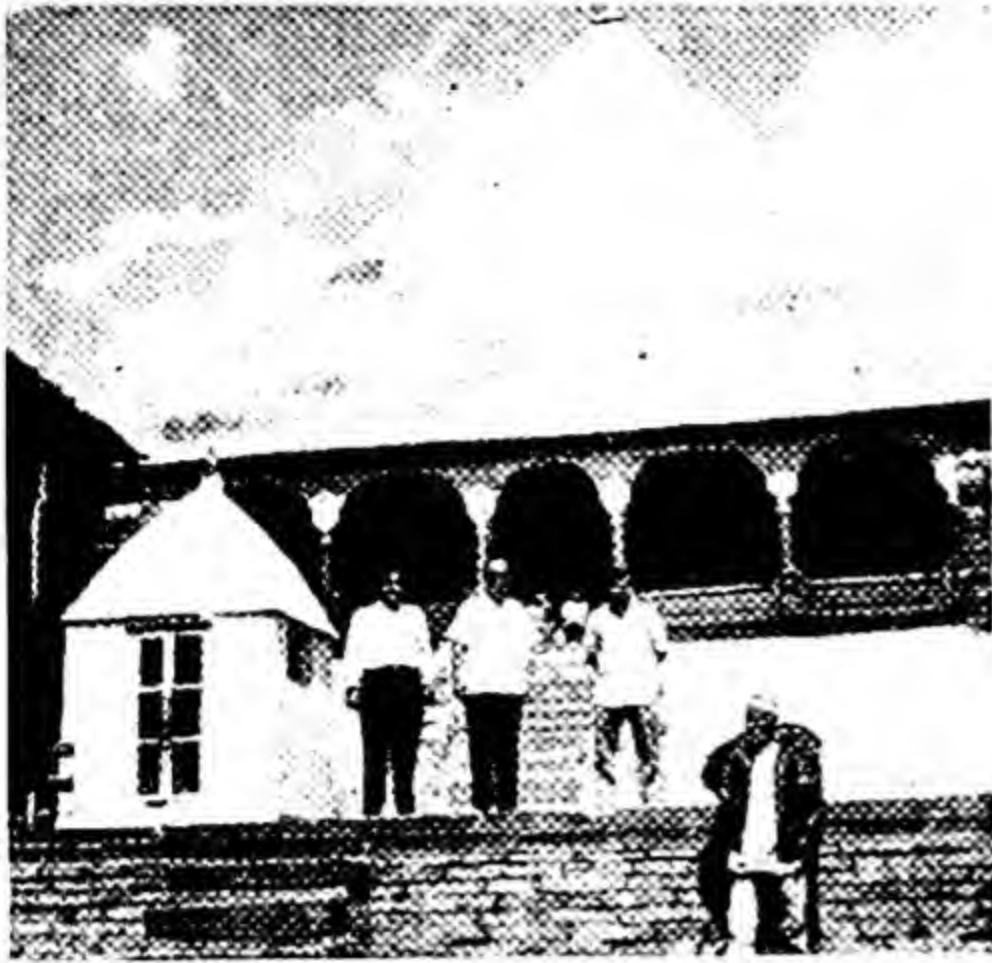
The world's wealth, O Ghani, cannot wipe out one's fault;
For all gold's scratchings, the touchstone's still black.

Ghani Kashmiri

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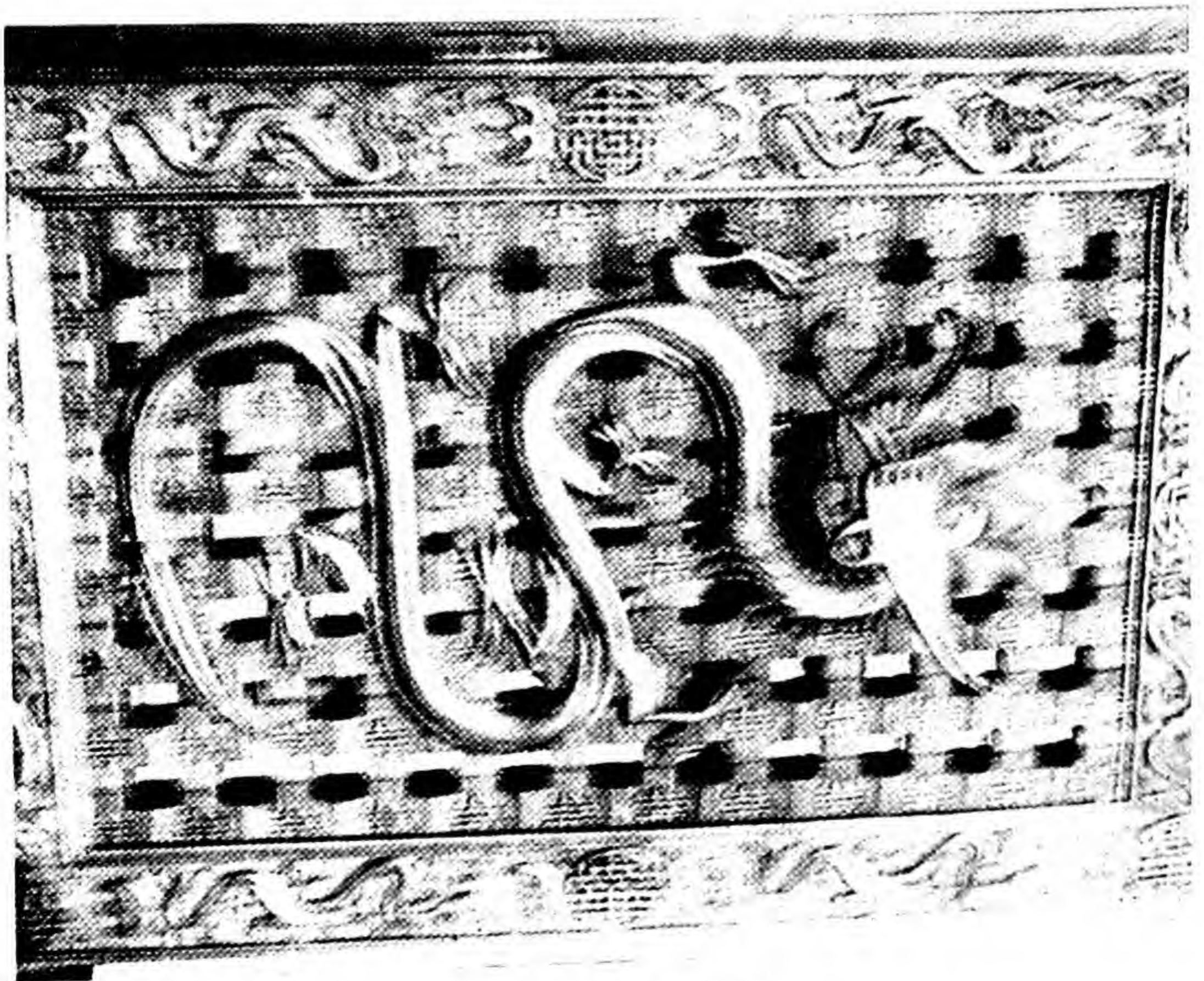
Vasuki Nag Temple Images, Bhadrawah.



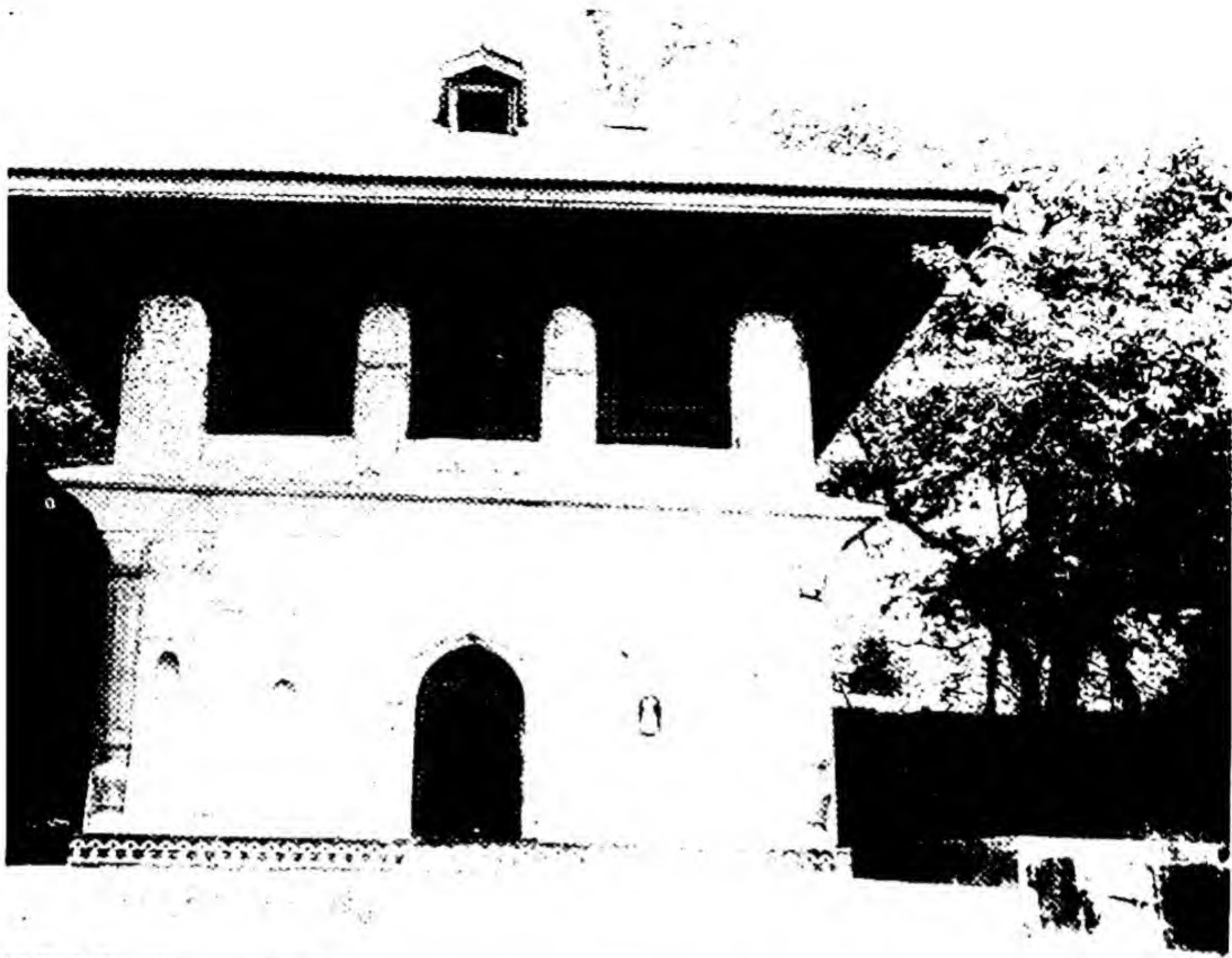
Vasuki Temple, Bhadrawah.



Vasuki Temple, Gatha.



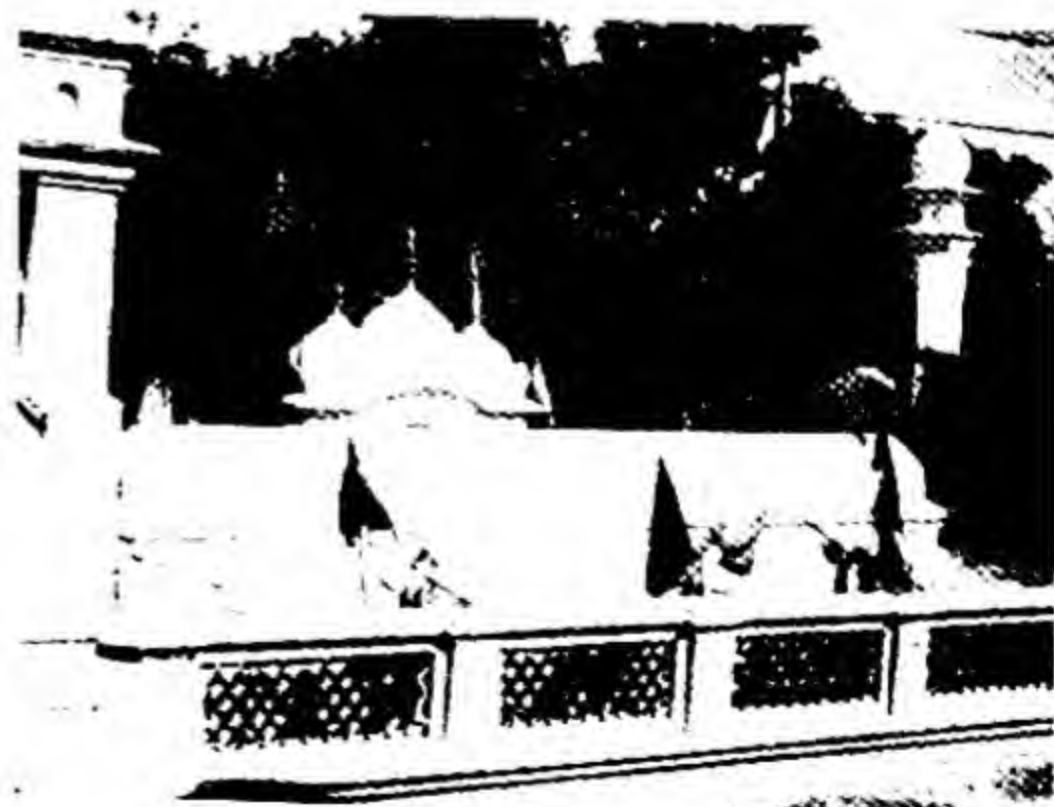
Nag-Devta (Wooden image).



Shahdara Sharif, Thana Mandi (Rajouri).



Pir Baba, Jammu.



Masoleum of Pir Roshan Shah Wali, Jammu.



Asrar-i-Sharif, Kishtwar.



Imambara, Jammu.]



Jamia Masjid, Bhadrawah.

SECULAR TRADITION IN JAMMU

SINCE Independence, Jammu has, in some circles, come to be associated with Hindu obscurantism and reaction of the worst type, thanks to the propaganda of pseudo-nationalists and communalists. But this is far from the truth. Jammu has a glorious tradition of tolerance and piety which goes back to centuries past. In fact the broadmindedness and tolerance of some of the Jammu rulers stands in sharp contrast to the bigotry and narrow-mindedness of some of the Muslim rulers of Kashmir.

The rulers of Jammu respected spiritually advanced men of all faiths. This is proved by the patronage which they extended to them and the high regard in which both the rulers and the people held them. One of the great rulers of Jammu, Raja Ranjit Dev settled Muslims in the city and had a mosque built for them. He would stop and come down from his horse, out of respect for their feelings, when the *muzzien* was giving the call for prayers or when the prayers were being said. Later rulers too were tolerant towards the new faith. A number of Dogra rulers are known to have made donations towards the construction of mosques. And so far as the people are concerned their attitude towards the faith may be judged from the fact that they show great respect towards the numerous Muslim shrines in the province and often visit them with cash and other offerings.

The number of Muslim shrines in different parts of Jammu province is next only to that of their Hindu counterparts. There is in fact hardly any village with a sizeable Muslim population that does not have a mosque or shrine of its own. The larger towns like Kishtwar, Bhadrawah, Rajouri and Poonch have a number of them. They have *Id-gahs* also.

J & K STATE ON THE ROAD TO PROGRESS

Jammu and Kashmir, as a constituent State of the Indian Union, has registered phenomenal progress in various fields of socio-economic endeavours.

Some concrete achievements in the sphere of nation building activity:—

1. Expenditure on educational development has increased from 33.68 lakhs in 1947-48 to 1124.04 lakhs in 1973-74.
 2. The number of colleges rose from 4 in 1947-48 to 22 in 1972-73.
 3. Food production has increased from 9.23 lakh tonnes in 1968-69 to 10.12 lakh tonnes in 1973-74.
 4. Per capita expenditure on medical facilities has increased from 47 paise in 1947-48 to Rs. 14.29 in 1972-73.
 5. Life expectancy rose from 32 years in 1947-48 to 50 years in 1972-73.
 6. Road length increased from 1615 miles in 1956 to 6766 kms. in 1973-74.
 7. Power generation increased from 4,000 Kws. in 1947-48 to 82 Mws. in 1973-74.
 8. Revenue receipts of the State increased from Rs. 2.75 crores in 1947-48 to Rs. 106.51 crores in 1972-73.
 9. Out of nearly 30,000 educated unemployed about 9,000 youth have been assured employment; 4,000 under self-employment scheme and 5,000 in different Government Departments.
 10. About 15,000 industrial units have been registered and more such units are coming up; over 60,000 persons are engaged in traditional handicrafts.
 11. The tentative outlay for the 5th Five Year Plan is Rs. 400 crores, which surpasses all the previous allocations made in respect of different Plans.
 12. The total outlay of the development plan for the current year is Rs. 50.46 crores.
-

MUSLIM PLACES OF WORSHIP

PRINCIPAL MOSQUES

JAMMU city has about half a dozen mosques, besides various shrines. Among the more prominent mosques in the city are the *Shahi Masjid*, Mastgarh; the *Wazirni* mosque in Ustad Mohalla, and the mosques in Urdu Bazar (now known as Rajinder Bazar) and Lakdatta Bazar.

There is a mosque of Ditu Wazirni in Poonch also. Samba has a mosque built by a famous Khadi weaver Fazal-ul-Din or Fazallu Jullaha, as he was commonly known. Kishtwar, Bhadrawah, Udhampur, Rajouri and Poonch also have a Jamia Masjid each. Jammu city has a stately Jamia Masjid.

Some of the mosques are a prominent feature of the religious landscape of various towns. Such a one is the Jammu Jamia Masjid at Talab Khatikan. Kishtwar too has a big mosque whose minarets stand out prominently among the numerous buildings of the town.

The Jamia Masjid of Bhadrawah is even more impressive. There is perhaps no other mosque in Jammu province which is so grand and imposing. Its impressive design at once arrests the eye. It comprises a central building with two halls and side rooms. There are four lofty minarets at the four corners and a number of bath rooms with arrangements for hot and cold water. The halls are spacious and can accommodate a large number of people. A stately *chenar* tree in the fore-ground greatly adds to the beauty of this beautiful structure, which has been erected through public donations.

PROMINENT SHRINES

In addition to the large number of mosques, Jammu province has a number of Muslim shrines. Most of these are places which have been hallowed by the presence of a saint or sage at some time

in the past. These shrines enjoy the esteem of Muslims and non-Muslims alike, testifying to the secularism of the people of the province.

CITY SHRINES

PIR ROSHAN SHAH WALI

One of the prominent Muslim shrines in Jammu city is near Gumat Gate, only a short distance below the splendid Rughnath temples. It is the *makbara* (mausoleum) of Pir Roshan Shah Wali. This man of piety found his way into the city soon after the Muslim conquest of northern India. He is believed to have come from Arabia and took his abode near Gumat which was then a jungle. Gumat was the last spur of hills before the plains began. Impressed by the piety and miracles of the sage, the local chieftain used to visit him to offer obeisance and provide for his maintenance etc. And when he departed from this evanescent world he had a mausoleum built at the spot where he resided. This mausoleum has since continued to be the residence of *Pirs* and pious men. The original structure made of stones and clay was rebuilt *pucca* by Maharaja Ranbir Singh. A mosque was also constructed at the graveyard and the place is now in the custody of the Muslim Auqaf Committee, Jammu.

A large number of people, Muslims and Hindus both, visit the shrine to seek the saint's blessings. They come mostly on Thursdays and light earthen-ware oil lamps in homage to the departed Pir.

Pir Roshan Shah was a very tall person and so came to be known also as *Pir Nau Gazia* (i.e., nine-foot tall Pir).

PIR MITHA

Another Muslim shrine in Jammu is that of *Pir Mitha*. It is in the close vicinity of the celebrated Hindu cave temple of Pirkhuh. Pir Mitha was a contemporary of Siddha Garib Nath who lived at Pirkhuh. Both had won the esteem and allegiance of the people by their piety, predictions and miracles. They are stated to have lived in the time of Raja Ajaib Dev, in the second half of fifteenth century A.D.

The Pir would not take anything cooked or boiled by any one

other than himself. All that he would accept from his devotees was a pinch of sugar. That is why this sweet-tempered man of God came to be known as *Pir Mitha*.

Pir Mitha is believed to have been a Shia, and the Shia mosque in Jammu lies near his place. The *Imambara* is also there. Another *Imambara* is to be found in Poonch town.

PIR BABA

Yet another prominent Muslim shrine in the city of temples is that of Pir Badhan Ali Shah Sahib. This is in south Jammu across the Tawi. Pir Badhan Ali Shah was a contemporary of Guru Nanak. He was born at Talwandi about 500 years ago. He passed the closing years of his life at Satwari where he died.

The Durgah of the saint at Satwari, about 10 kms from the city, is thronged by Hindu and Muslim devotees on the occasion of the annual *Urs*, which takes place on the first Thursday of *Ashad*. Another *Urs* is held about the middle of *Pousha*. Both attract thousands of people to the shrine. Every Thursday hundreds of men and women, mostly Hindus, visit the shrine to make their offerings, including oil for lighting lamps at the grave.

Pir Badhan Ali Shah was a bachelor all his life and a vegetarian, who according to his followers, subsisted largely on milk.

Another shrine of the Pir is said to be at Anandpur Sahib in the Punjab. He is stated to have been a friend of Guru Nanak.

Another similar shrine is to be found at Gandhi Nagar, across the national highway. This is believed to be of a Pir who was closely related to Pir Roshan Shah Wali, perhaps his brother. According to some people he was related to Pir Badan Ali Shah. It is also visited by people in large numbers.

A large number of Muslim Pirs appear to have lived in different parts of Jammu from time to time. The spots where the more prominent among them lived or sojourned acquired the status of shrines. Panch Pir, situated at a little distance from the Maharaja's palace on the Jammu-Srinagar highway is one such, though less known shrine. The place is so known obviously because of the residence there of five Pirs.

GARIB SHAH

Garib Shah is another of those Muslim saints who command the allegiance of god-fearing people, Hindu and Muslim both. He lived at Samba. A number of stories are current about the spiritual eminence of this man of god. According to one of these, a proud Rajput father who had succeeded in winning the hand of a girl of his choice for his son, boastfully told the saint about it. The saint quickly retorted with a sigh: "Things happen only as ordained by Him". By evening time the son had caught a raging fever and passed away soon after.

Garib Shah's grave is looked after with care by the local Hindus. Passers-by bow in reverence to this great man who was a symbol of simple living, high thinking, peace and harmony.

The saint is held in such high esteem that since 1947 when Muslims of the town went away, his grave is looked after with great regard by the local Hindus. They white-wash it and sprinkle it with flowers.

KATHUA SHRINES

PIR FAZIL SHAH

There are a number of Muslim shrines in Kathua. The most prominent of these is the mausoleum of Pir Fazil Shah. It lies to the east of Kathua town at Parlibund.

The Pir hailed from a shepherd family and from his very boyhood displayed saint-like qualities...Many miracles are ascribed to him even in his early youth. These attracted notice and people started flocking to his side to seek his blessings and benedictions.

At present also people visit his mausoleum and light lamps for the betterment and prosperity of themselves, their families and their live-stock.

A big fair is held on the 24th of *Kartik* when people of all castes and communities attend and make offerings.

PIR CHHATAR SHAH

Another respected Pir in the area was named Baba Chhatar Shah. His grave lies to the south of village Nagri, about a dozen kms from Kathua.

The grave is surrounded by thick walls on four sides but without a roof. A roof is stated to have been put up a number of times, but always collapsed as, it is believed, the saint did not like it. The shrine is surmounted with multicoloured flags, hoisted by the devotees in fulfilment of their prayers.

There is a big circular spring near the shrine which is known for its cold and hygienic water. A visit to the shrine is considered very beneficial for those suffering from skin diseases. It is also a popular belief that the Pir blesses barren couples with children.

A fair held here on the 7th of *Ashad* to commemorate the anniversary of the saint is attended by thousands of people of all faiths.

Chodi Lava, a small village in Basohli Tehsil, contains a Muslim shrine comprising a *Pir-Khana* and a mosque. A well-attended fair is held here on the 7th, 8th and 9th of *Ashad*.

The place enjoys the respect of Hindus and Muslims both. The shrine is considered particularly efficacious in so far as the welfare of the cattle is concerned. And when the peasants' wishes in this behalf are fulfilled, they come next year to make their offerings in thanks-giving. But there are no animal sacrifices. Oil lamps are lit besides offerings of cash, grain, etc.

UDHAMPUR ZIARATS

There is an old popular Muslim shrine at Salara village a little beyond the Chenani Hydel Project. It is about 14 kms away from Udhampur city and at a height of about 1700 feet. One of the great Pirs of Kishtwar is believed to have sojourned here for some time. In times of drought people go to the shrine and their prayers and supplications are rewarded with rain.

TAKIYA AURANG ALI SHAH

There is a *ziarat* inside the city also known after one Aurang Ali Shah. The *ziarat* is visited on Thursdays when people light earthen oil lamps. It is said to be over 200 years old and people of all communities visit it.

The shrine of Pir Khan in Ramnagar town also enjoys the esteem of Muslims and non-Muslims both. The Pir hailed from a nearby village but later shifted to the town. His burial place is the present shrine.

There is another *ziarat* at Palnoo village in the Tehsil. There is also a shrine at Sarab in Reasi.

KISHTWAR SHRINES

Two of the most famous Muslim shrines in Jammu are to be found in Kishtwar. This 5400 feet high valley not only rivals Kashmir in scenic beauty but resembles it in more respects than one. Like Kashmir, Kishtwar grows saffron. The *chenar*, the pride of Kashmir's trees, is to be found here also. The Kishtwaris may well be called the cousins of Kashmiris, so close are they in beliefs, habits, customs and character. Most of them know or speak Kashmiri.

SHAH FARID-UD-DIN SAHIB

Shah Farid-ud-Din, a great Muslim divine, came to Kishtwar during the reign of Raja Jai Singh (1656 to 1664 A.D.) to propagate Islam. He hailed from Baghdad and came to India in the time of Shah Jahan. The Moghul emperor wanted him to put up permanently in his capital. But he did not stay there and came to Kishtwar with a number of his disciples. He was eminently successful in his mission and established Islam as one of the respected faiths in the area.

The *ziarat* constructed over his tomb is now a popular place of pilgrimage for the people of Kishtwar, Bhadrawah and other places.

Shah Farid was blessed with a number of saintly children. Two of them Hazrat Akhyar-ud-Din, and Syed Anwar-ud-Din lie buried in the *ziarat* in which lies the tomb of Shah Farid himself.

Shah Farid-ud-Din lived to the ripe old age of 99. His diet comprised bread of barley flour and a vegetable sauce. He is stated to have done many miraculous deeds. Once he restored the eye-sight of a neighbour. The local Raja won against a neighbouring chief when in the midst of a losing battle he prayed to the saint.

A big fair is held here on the 7th of *Ashad* every year. It is attended by thousands of people from far and near, including devotees from Kashmir.

ASRAR-I-SHARIF

Many miracles are ascribed to Shah Asrar-ud-Din Sahib, who was perhaps the youngest son of Shah Farid-ud-Din. Like the father he was also spiritually advanced. He passed away at the early age of 18 but even during this short span of life he created an undying fame for himself by his piety and miracles. It is said that he once restored to life a Hindu youth who was his playmate. As he was strolling he found a Hindu's corpse being taken to the cremation ground at the north-western end of the *chaugan* (turf-covered village common which was once used for polo-playing.) On enquiry he found that it was the *arthi* of his playmate. He directed the pall-bearers to place the *arthi* on the ground. He then touched the dead body with his stick saying "Get up, you owe me a game." The dead man at once came to life and got up.

The *ziarat* lies at the south western end of the spacious *chaugan*. It is one of the best in the whole of the State and highly respected. The *Urs* on the 25th of *Kartik* draws large numbers of people from all over the province and even Kashmir.

BANDARKOTE CAVE

There is a small cave at Bandarkote just above the bridge over the Chenab. Sheikh Zain-ud-Din Wali is believed to have stayed in it for many years.

The Sheikh who hailed from Palmar (Kishtwar) later moved to Kashmir where there is a big shrine to him at Aish Muqam on the road to Pahalgam from Anantnag. He was a principal disciple of Sheikh Nur-ud-Din Sahib Wali, patron saint of Muslims of Kashmir. His ancestors too belonged to Kishtwar, probably Sarthal.

Bandarkote is about half a dozen miles north of Kishtwar town.

There is an inscription on a rock at Bandarkote. This, according to the Kishtwar writer, Shri Ghulam Mustafa Ishrat, 'is presumed to carry some Buddhist message.'

BHADRAWAH ZIARATS

Bhadrawah town has a number of shrines of its own. The more prominent among these are those of Gandar Shah, Sidqi-Shah and Syeed Sahib.

GANDAR SHAH

The shrine of Gandar Shah is in the vicinity of Jamia Masjid. Earlier known as Sikandar Shah, he hailed from Pooliya village in Dooru-Shahabad area of Anantnag District. His descendants had been talented people, one of them having attempted a history of Kishtwar.

Sidqi Shah was a contemporary of Gandar Shah. Both of them were in Bhadrawah in the thirties and forties of the last century. His shrine is locally known as the *takiya* Sidqi Shah.

Another wellknown Pir of Bhadrawah was known as Syeed Sahib. He is believed to have been a disciple of Shah Asrar of Kishtwar.

RAJOURI-POONCH SHRINES

SHAHDARA SHARIF

RAJOURI, like Poonch, lies on the other side of Pir Panchal range enclosing the Valley of Kashmir on its west. It has had intimate political and cultural relations with the Valley in ancient times.

The Moghul route to Kashmir went through Rajouri town and Thana Mandi which is about twenty miles north-east of it. Rajouri contained one of the best Moghul *serais* on the route and a good mosque.

About 20 miles from Rajouri is a Muslim shrine, known as Shahdara Sharif. The shrine has grown round the tomb of a great Muslim saint, Pir Ghulam Shah.

Ghulam Shah was born in a Sayeed family in village Saida Kasraban in Rawalpindi District (now in Pakistan). He displayed his miraculous powers early in life. It is said that once while grazing his flock, he devoted himself to meditation. The cattle, sheep and goats, strayed into a neighbour's field and damaged his crop. The wronged neighbour felt very sore about it and complained to his father about the boy's negligence. The father reprimanded the youngster. Confident of himself, the young Pir asked his father and the complainant to go and see things for themselves. When they went there they found the whole crop intact. This and similar

other miracles made the young Pir famous in his area. But his preceptor did not like it and ordered him to go to Shahdara, then a little-known jungle resort.

Pir Ghulam Shah did not know anything about the place. But in the true mystic fashion, he dared not ask. He started for Shahdara at the bidding of his master. His first halt was made in Kalaban in Poonch. Here he meditated and practised austerities. Then he moved to Dundak (also in Poonch). He meditated under a big stone on a dry patch of land in the midst of a roaring stream. One night the stream was flooded. A Gujjar who used to supply milk presumed that the *fakir* must have been washed away by the turbulent flood. But when the flood subsided, smoke was seen rising from the place where the Pir had his abode. The Gujjar went to the place and to his pleasant surprise found him hale and hearty.

This made him well known here also. So the Pir decided to leave at once for his destination, Shahdara, a place he knew nothing about. But as happens in such cases, he had not to wait long for guidance. One night while he was asleep, his preceptor indicated to him in a dream that as he proceeded he would come to a smouldering fire in the forest. This was Shahdara. As directed, the young Pir released a goat when he arrived at the place and it was immediately carried away by a tiger, as the preceptor had foretold. The Pir lived here for seven years, busy in meditation and penance. On his death, a tomb was erected over his grave and this became a place of pilgrimage. The fame of the place spread in course of time and today Shahdara Sharif is visited by a large number of people to offer homage and prayers for the fulfilment of their wishes.

To reach Shahdara one has first to go to Thana Mandi, 20 miles from Rajouri at the foot of the Dera Gali Pass through which a metalled road leads to Bafiaz and Surankot on the way to Poonch. From Thana Mandi a bridle path, 3 miles long, to the west, brings the traveller to Shahdara. The trek involves an ascent of several hundred feet and the scaling of a precipitous hump. The construction of a metalled road to the shrine is an urgent necessity.

There is a tradition that Gulab Singh halted here for some time while he was in pursuit of Agar Khan, Raja of Rajouri, who had revolted against Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Gulab Singh was not a Raja then. He was only a Company Commander but the local priest foretold that he would one day become the ruler of Jammu

and Kashmir. According to another version, the Pir Sahib himself appeared to Gulab Singh in a dream and told him so. The prophecy came true and Gulab Singh assigned large tracts of land as *jagir* to the shrine.

Shahdara is derived from the Sanskrit word *simhadwara* "Lion Gate." It appears that the place was on the ancient route to the Kashmir Valley and led to an important Devi shrine, dedicated to *Chandi*. It is significant that a mountain meadow higher up is even today known as *Chandimar*. Later, one comes to the celebrated *Kaunsar Nag* or *Vishnu-Pad* lake on the way to Shopian in Kashmir.

The eminent Kashmiri archaeologist, Shri R.C. Kak noted five *baulies* (water-shoots) in Shahdara village, the best preserved of which flows from a spout shaped like a tiger's head from the middle of the back wall. "Fragments of stunted fluted columns still exist. The upper panels are carved with figures of gods, goddesses, votaries, warriors with swords and shields and a bowman shooting an arrow."

SHAH SATTAR

Shah Sattar's shrine is on a spur above the handsome hamlet of Surankot on the way to Poonch. The shrine is about two miles from the village. The local people regard the shrine highly.

PIR DASTAGIR

Poonch has a *ziarat* of Hazrat Shah Qbdul Qadir Geelani Sahib. Another shrine to this great soul exists at Banihal; it houses a relic of his.

SAKHI MAIDAN

This place is located in a village about 5 kms from Mendhar town. There is a *mazar* of Pir Choota Shah. It is said that a tree erupted miraculously from the grave of the saint some time after his burial. The place is held in great esteem by people in Mendhar-Poonch area. They flock to it in large numbers for the fulfillment of their wishes.

A noteworthy feature of Sakhi Maidan is that the open ground is the venue of games in the month of July. Local teams participate in them enthusiastically.

JAHANGIR'S GRAVE

What makes a saint? This is a difficult question to answer. Of course a saint is one who has saintly qualities, is devoted to god, leads a life of piety and has equal regard for all, irrespective of caste or creed. But sometimes sainthood is conferred on a person who apparently has not many saintly qualities. There is a saying in Kashmiri according to which "Faith in a person is more important than his being a saint." Accordingly a curious shrine had grown up in the *serai* at Chingas on the old Moghul route to Kashmir.

The *serai* is built on a bluff that over-looks the Sailani *nullah* coming from Rajouri. It is a spacious inn with a mosque inside.

Jahangir, it is stated, breathed his last here on his return from Kashmir. The fact of his death was, however, carefully kept from the people to avert a fratricidal war among his sons. And for fear of too rapid decomposition of his body, his entrails are believed to have been buried in the *serai* at Chingas. Shri R.C. Kak in his *Antiquities of Bhimber and Rajouri* says! "This hallowed spot has since been raised to the status of a shrine by the Hindus and Muslims alike. Prayer at the tomb is considered eminently efficacious. Childless parents come here to pray for off-spring, the sick for the recovery of their health, the poor for riches, the world-weary for divine comfort, and in the local belief the prayers of all are speedily fulfilled."

MOGHUL MOSQUES

Besides the Chingas *serai* which, lying halfway between Naushera and Rajouri, commands a magnificent view of the Pir Panchal Range, the Moghuls built a number of other *serais* on the old route to Kashmir—at Bhimber, Nowshera, Rajouri, Thana-Mandi etc. The Moghul rulers and their courtiers used to rest in these on their way to Kashmir. Some of the *serais* contained mosques.

The best among these was the mosque built in Jahangir's time at Rajouri. Another mosque known as Andherkot *masjid* is stated to have been built by a native Muslim Rajput chief, Yusuf Khan.

There are some old mosques in Poonch also. These include the mosque of Ditu Wazirni and the Nizam-ud-Din's mosque. About

two furlongs north-west of the former are a mosque and two tombs of the pre-Sikh period.

Ditti Wazirni was a woman of wide sympathies and in addition to the mosque had a *Gurdwara* built which is still well maintained. Nizam-ud-Din was a *Wazir* of the Raja of Poonch. His mosque is in the heart of the town and people still offer prayers in it.

* * * *

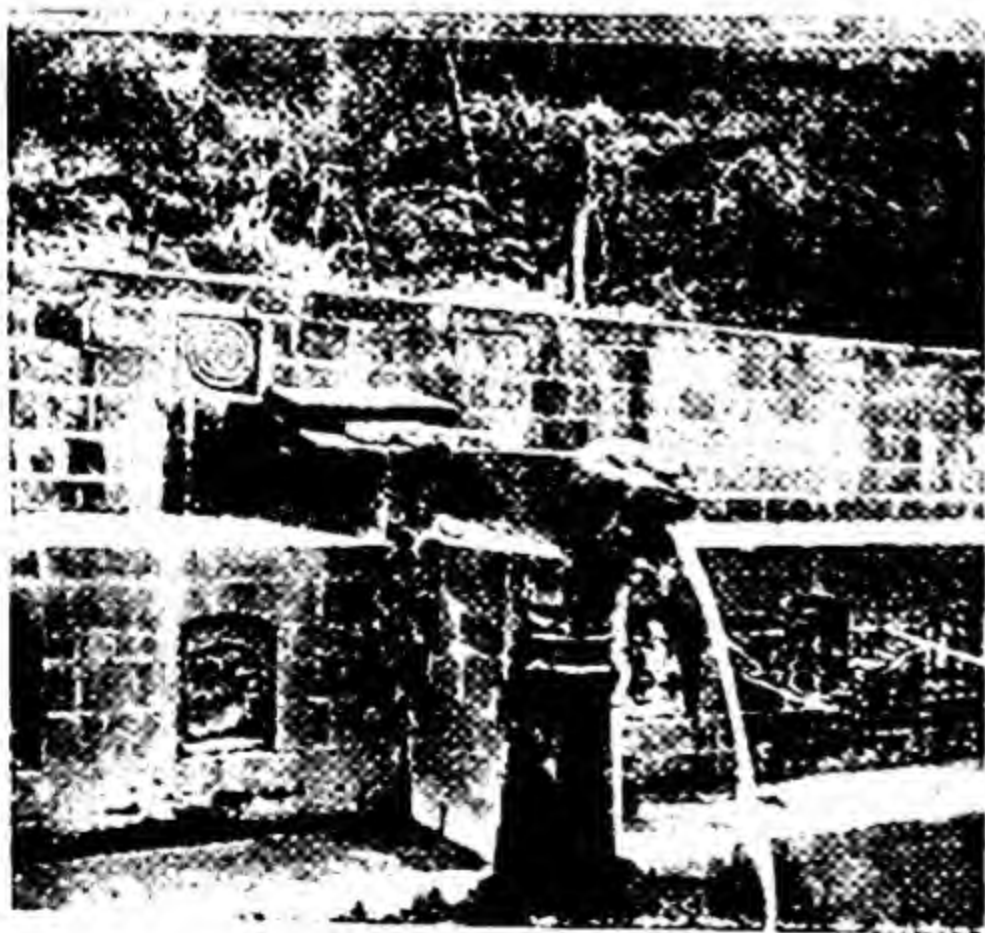
O, Sarfi, as on every side a ray
Has fallen from His face to light the night,
Impossible it is for you to say.
That Somnath has not the Ka'ba's light.

Shaikh Yakub Sarfi

* * * *



Fair at Bawa Jitoo's Samadhi.



Papnashni, Sudh Mahadev.



Protestant Church, Jammu.



Jain Temple, Jammu.



Gulab Singh



Ranbir Singh



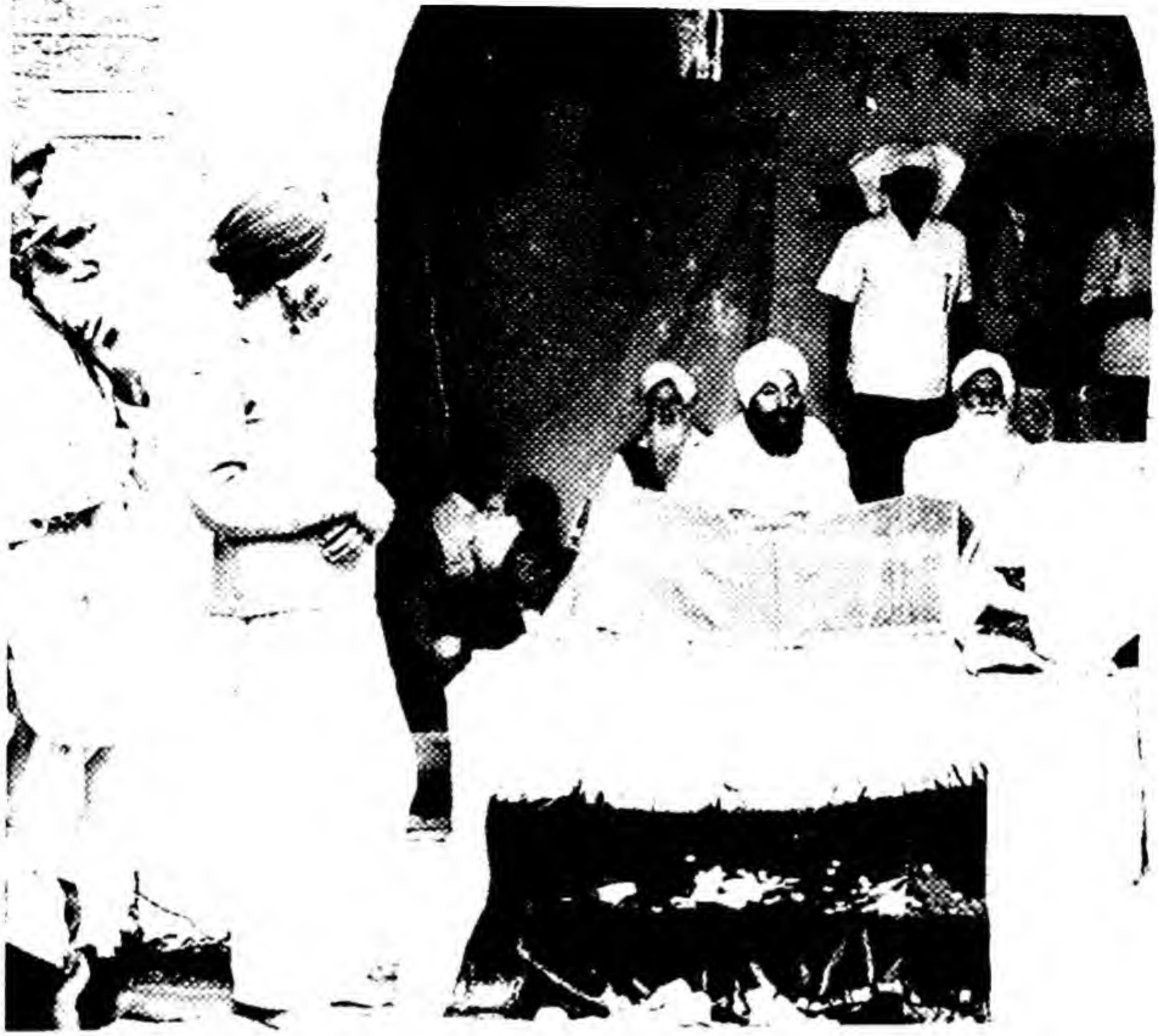
Bhagwan Mahavira in Jain Temple.



Pratap Singh



Author touching massive *trishul*,
Sudh Mahadev



Gurdwara Nangali Sahib, Poonch.



Bauli panels, Pappnashni.

CHURCHES

THOUGH the number of Christians in the State is not large, there are a number of churches, mostly in the two cities of Jammu and Srinagar.

- Jammu City which contains about 2749 Christians out of a total of 4120 urban Christians in the State has two churches. There is one at Udhampur also.

The Protestant Church which is on the *Vir Marg*, (earlier known as Residency Road), is the oldest church in the province. It originally belonged to the Church of Scotland. The Roman Catholic Church, which is near the Jewel Talkies, is a recent institution. The Catholic Mission was set up in November 1952. It runs the Presentation Convent School at Gandhi Nagar. The School which has more than a thousand students on its rolls is run by the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the same compound, however, but in separate quarters, the Sisters are running a small school for the poor backward classes. The priests of the Catholic Mission also run the St. Peter's School on B.C. Road for the poor.

The Protestant Mission also runs a school. This was a Middle School but has now been converted into a High School. The school caters mostly to the needs of the backward sections of the people living around it. The Pastor is Rev. Aziz William who hailed from Sialkot but has been resident in the city since 1944. The Church premises are full of stately trees.

The Sisters of the Apostolic Carmel of Mangalore run a school at Udhampur since 1965. The school which was originally set up for the children of Army Officers was later handed over to the Sisters.

There is a Missionary Society at Bhadrawah engaged in social welfare activities in Kishtwar, Bhadrawah and Batote areas. The Society runs a Nursing Centre at Bhadrawah.

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RELIGIOUS TRUSTS

DHARMARTH TRUST

WHILE maintaining the noble tradition of Raja Ranjit Dev's broadmindedness and religious tolerance, the Dogra rulers were deeply devoted their own religion and took pains for its progress. The pace for this was set by the founder, Maharaja Gulab Singh himself.

Despite his preoccupation with wars and the administration of his newly founded kingdom extending from Punjab in the south to the confines of Chinese Turkistan in the north, the Maharaja found time to devote to the propagation of his own religion. Only two places of pilgrimage were well-known and frequented in Jammu at the beginning of his reign. These were the cave shrine of Shri Vaishno Devi and the Shiva shrine at Purmandal, about two dozen miles south-east of Jammu. But the Maharaja had a number of new temples built, including the famous Rughnath Temple in honour of his family deity, Shri Rughnath or Sri Rama.

Gulab Singh also created a Fund for the progress and development of the Hindu religion with a personal donation of five lakhs of rupees. This was known as the Treasury of Shri Rughnathji. The income accruing from the Fund was to be utilized for the permanent maintenance of *sadabarats* (places for the distribution of free food etc. to ascetics and pilgrims) and the maintenance, upkeep and renovation of old temples and the construction of new ones. Members of the ruling dynasty made further donations to the Fund in subsequent years. According to Dr. Sufi the fund had swelled to Rs. 15 lakhs during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. A further sum of Rs. 5 lakhs was added to it following his death. *Jagirs* and *muafis* were attached to the temples and the income accruing therefrom, as also from the endowment, was used as laid down in its Constitution. The Kashmiri *dharmshalas* that we even now find at Hardwar and Varanasi owe their existence to this Fund.

Gulab Singh appointed his son Ranbir Singh as the Trustee of

the newly-created endowment. In accordance with his father's wishes, Ranbir Singh placed the *sadabrats* on a permanent footing and appointed a Council for the supervision, management and protection of the Dharmarth Fund. The Council comprised seven members, four of whom were *sadhus* or ascetics. The Maharaja ordained that the Council shall supervise, manage and protect the Dharmarth Fund and transact business according to the *Ain-i-Dharmarth* i.e., the Constitution of the Dharmarth Council. He enjoined upon his sons, heirs, descendants and the officials of the State to lend their assistance to the Council in the discharge of its duties. He forbade the members of the Council from incurring any expenditure not permitted by the *Dharmarth* constitution. The constitution laid down "whoever among the heirs of the *sarkar* and the State servants and officials expended any money towards any other head was to incur the sin of having killed one crore of cows." According to the Dharmarth Constitution six hundred students were to be kept under tuition on behalf of the Maharaja in schools in temples. *Goshalas* were to be maintained and fodder was to be provided for cows and bullocks. A batch of translators, compilers and copyists was to be appointed for translating Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic texts. A *haveli* or residential building was to be constructed at Kashi (Varanasi) for pilgrims who could stay in it for 15 days or so.

Following in the footsteps of his illustrious father, Ranbir Singh, who besides being a great patron of art and learning was deeply religious, launched upon spreading a network of temples all over the State. He completed the Rughnathji temple and developed it into an unrivalled temple complex by adding a number of new temples. He also set up the stately Ranbireshwar temple in Jammu. The city of Jammu witnessed a rich growth of temples in his time and in the time of his son and successor, Maharaja Pratap Singh; so much so that the city came to be known as the City of Temples. According to one contemporary English writer the Maharaja's ambition was that Jammu should rival Banaras (Varanasi) in the number of its temples. The temple complex at Uttarbahni was also set up in Ranbir Singh's time.

The Maharaja established *pathshalas* for the propagation of Sanskrit. Five hundred students were admitted into the *pathshalas* attached to the Rughnath *mandir*, the Ranbireshwar temple and

Gadadharji temple in Jammu. Another five hundred were admitted into the *pathshalas* at Uttarbahni.

Maharaja Pratap Singh proved to be a worthy successor to his father. According to a Muslim writer, the Dharmarth Department was at the peak of its progress in his time.

The old railway line from Suchetgarh to Jammu (disrupted by Pakistani raiders in 1947 A.D.) was originally made from the funds of the Dharmarth Department. About 16 lakhs of rupees were invested in this public welfare project.

Pratap Singh and his two brothers, Ram Singh and Amar Singh, made liberal donations to the Dharmarth Fund from time to time. Several new temples were set up and many old ones renovated. Golden ornaments and jewellery were purchased for the decoration of the sacred *murtis* on festive occasions. *Sadabarats* were established at places of pilgrimage outside the State, such as Hardwar, Varanasi, Rameshvaram, Ayodhya and Vrindavan. Scholarships were given to the students from the State for the prosecution of higher studies in Sanskrit. Learned *pandits* from outside the State were employed on the staff of the Rughnath Sanskrit *Mahavidyalaya*, Jammu. Consequently the *Mahavidyalaya* came to be an important seat of learning in northern India.

Maharaja Hari Singh who succeeded Partap Singh threw open to Harijans all the temples managed by the Trust. Scholarships were sanctioned for Harijan children studying in schools and colleges. The Dharmarth Trust embarked upon humanitarian work during Pratap Singh's reign when provision was made for helping Hindu orphans and widows. Money was spent for the provision of food-grains to the people of Kishtwar when that remote locality was visited by a terrible famine.

The Dharmarth Trust did yoeman's service when, following the Pakistani invasion, Jammu and Srinagar were flooded with several thousand refugees. The Trust threw upon its *dharmshalas* to provide much-needed shelter to the refugees. Free *langars* to feed them were also started. The Trust spent over 15 lakhs of rupees on these activities.

To add to the difficulties of the Trust most of its lands on whose income it so largely depended were taken away without any compensation under the Land Reforms of the first popular Government headed by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah.

Despite financial and other difficulties, Dharmarth Trust is continuing its charitable activities as enjoined by its Constitution. The Trust is maintaining over a hundred temples and shrines all over the State.

A multi-storeyed *serai* costing four lakhs of rupees has been constructed at Ad-Kunwari to provide accommodation to about a thousand pilgrims at a time. The pilgrims *serai* at Katra has been renovated. The Cave shrine and the adjacent *bazar* have been electrified. About two lakhs rupees are spent annually to provide facilities to the pilgrims to Shri Vaishno Devi shrine. About twenty five thousand rupees are spent on the provision of facilities to the pilgrims to cave shrine of Shri Amarnathji in Kashmir.

The Trust contributes towards the construction of temples etc. and the running of Sanskrit educational institutions. A handsome donation of Rs. 20,000 has been made for a temple and *serai* at Doda, which are being built by the people there.

The Dharmarth Council is at present headed by Brigadier Ghansara Singh, a retired officer of the State Forces.

Dr Karan Singh is the sole TRUSTEE of the Dharmarth Trust.

VED MANDIR

Ved Mandir is perhaps the most useful institution of its kind in Jammu. It was founded on December 20, 1916 A.D. by Maharaja Pratap Singh with the three-fold object of serving the poor and the destitute, protection of the cows, and dissemination of Vedic culture.

The late Maharaja founded the institution at the suggestion of Yogiraj Swami Champanathji and donated 84 kanals of land for the purpose.

In fulfilment of the first two objectives, an orphanage, a Home for the Aged, an *Andh-vidyalaya* (school for the blind) and a *goshala* were opened.

The orphanage, designated *Bal Niketan*, has over two dozen children on its rolls. Besides imparting them education the inmates are taught tailoring, gardening candle-making, bee-keeping, etc. There are arrangements for games and the boys are also taken out on excursions.

The Home for the Aged is run by the Ved Mandir Committee with the co-operation of people who donate money for the purpose.

There are 60 old men and women in it, some of them from outside the State. Both Bal Niketan and the Home for the Aged are doing good work and it is surprising that the Social Welfare Department should have cut down its aid to them. They deserve substantial aid from the State and Central Governments, including a plot of land for the construction of more rooms. At the moment these highly useful institutions subsist largely on public charity; one Shri D.N. Bhanot paying Rs. 225/- p.m. The school for the blind, which had been set up, has been taken over by the Government. The *goshala* is managed by the *Sanatan Dharam Sabha*.

In pursuance of the third objective a decrepit old Vishnu temple in the premises has been renovated. There is a Shiva temple also and worship is offered in both. There is one Vedic Library and a *Kirtan hall*.

HARI SINGH COLLEGIATE SCHOOL

Later Dogra rulers have continued the tradition of founding institutions for public good. Maharaja Hari Singh who died on April 26, 1961 had, by will dated 4th March, 1960, created a Trust for the administration of whatever Estate would be left after payment of death duty and other dues. This residue of his estate was to be utilised for the benefit of orphans of Jammu province by imparting them education in agriculture.

The D.A.V. College Trust and Management Society, New Delhi, which administers the Trust has started a collegiate school of the public type with Agriculture as a compulsory subject at Nagbani, about 8 miles west of Jammu city. Orphans of Jammu province are admitted as free students in the school while others are charged fees.

HARI-TARA CHARITABLE TRUST

Dr. Karan Singh and his wife Smt. Yashoraj Lakshmi have created the Hari-Tara Charitable Trust named after Dr. Karan Singh's parents. The objects of the Trust include support to religious organisations and spiritual values of all faiths, giving aid to deserving students and other individuals; and the setting up of and helping institutions for the promotion of education and culture.

For the furtherance of these objects they have donated their palaces known as *Ranbir Mahal* and *Karan Niwas* in Jammu, (at present rented to the J&K State Government for the *Raj Bhavan*) as well as three staff houses.

The Trust was registered in January 1970 A.D.

SIDH YOGASHRAM

A Yogashram has come up at Gujru Nagrota on the Dhar-Udhampur road with the object of imparting training in yogic practices and inculcating spiritual values and universal brotherhood. Assistance to the poor and helpless and provision of shelter to *sadhus* are also among the aims of the Ashram.

Shri Hari Bhakta Chaitanya is the Managing Trustee of the Ashram which was set up about eight years ago.

AUQAF COMMITTEES

With a view to ensuring better administration and supervision of all Muslim Waqfs in the State, a Muslim Waqaf Act has been enacted.

Under the Act, District Auqaf Committees have been set up in Poonch, Rajaouri, Doda, Kishtwar, Jammu, Kathua and Udhampur. They are required to maintain properly and preserve the sanctity of the various Muslim shrines and mosques in the province (Jammu). The Committees are answerable to the Government for their activities in relation to administration, maintenance and accounts etc. A Special Auqaf Officer has been appointed to supervise the work of the committees and examine their accounts.

* * *

God made Truth with many doors to welcome every believer who knocks on them.

Khalil Gibran

* * *
* * *

FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

The Indian calender, it has been well said, is one long procession of fairs and festivals. And it is good that it is so. For fairs and festivals enliven social life and bring people together. They afford opportunity to the people to find expression for their zest for living, delight in Nature and love of pageantry.

Jammu province might well be described as an epitome of India in more senses than one. The wide variety of climate and terrain that we come across in this vast subcontinent are met with here also. The weather ranges from the arctic cold of the higher reaches of its mountains in winter to the burning heat of its plains in summer. There are dense forests and boulder-strewn hillsides and ravines. There are arid patches and vast irrigated fields. There are mighty rivers surging with waters and streams whose sandy beds are dry except during monsoon rains. The province grows all the grains and fruits that are produced in the different parts of this country. Again we have here all the communities that inhabit the Indian subcontinent: Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians. There are a few hundred Jains and Buddhists also. And all of them have their holy days and festivals—some in celebration of the anniversaries of their gods and prophets, their saints and seers, their heroes and martyrs, and still others in celebration of the advent of the seasons. But there are certain fairs and festivals which are peculiar to this province or parts of it, or which are celebrated here with particular zest and enthusiasm. It is these only that are proposed to be covered here. Some of them have already come in for mention in connection with the various shrines.

LORI

The first peculiar festival that comes off early in the year is that of *Lori*. The festival marks the culmination of winter or the cold season. The festival is celebrated in the Punjab and Haryana also but the zest and enthusiasm that characterise it in Jammu are all their

own. The children go from door to door and collect funds for community bonfires for a number of days prior to *Makar Sankranti* which is the festival day proper. Huge heart-shaped structures made of bamboo sticks and splinters and decorated with multi-coloured papers in imitation of peacock feathers are taken out in processions.

At night-fall the fires are lit when the young and old stand around and throw in their offerings of parched grain and coins etc. Drew has described the celebration of the festival in the time of Ranbir Singh. He writes: "A large fire is made in the Square: (Purani Mandi) the Maharaja and his people, having first made their obeisance in the temple hard by, standing round, throw in handfuls of grain of all sorts, the signal for this being the decapitation by sword of a white kid, the head of which they throw into the fire first. The people keep the feast as well; in passing down the bazaars on this night, one has difficulty, in the narrow streets, to avoid the fires that every here and there are burning...." He adds that in this and other festivals the chief entertainment is the *nautch*, or dance by dancing girls.

Though there are no animal sacrifices or court dances now the festival continues to be celebrated with traditional gusto. The children who take out the *chhajjas* in procession, dance around the fires.

GURU RAVI DAS BIRTHDAY

Guru Ravi Das's birthday is celebrated with great enthusiasm in Jammu City. There are *bhajans* and *kirtan* and a public meeting in which leaders of all communities pay rich tributes to this great man who belonged to a socially backward community but whose spiritual eminence won him the allegiance and respect of the high and the low alike.

SHIVARATRI

Shivaratri is the occasion for three-day fairs at a number of places including Purmandal, Billawar, Jammu and Jhandi. The pilgrimage to the shrine of Shiv Khori takes place on this day. Large crowds of people throng the Shiva temples all over the province.

Big fairs take place in the temples of Ranbireshwar, Panchvaktar and Pir Khuh in Jammu city.

CHAITRA CHAUDISH

Chaitra Chaudish, or the 14th day of the dark half of *Chaitra* is an important religious day in many parts of Jammu province when popular festivals are held at a number of river and spring shrines, such as Purmandal and Gupt Ganga. One Dogra writer has described it as the most important religious festival of his people.

TIHAR

Another interesting festival, observed in Bhadrawah and Kishtwar in *Chaitra* is known as *Tihar*. On this occasion the springs and *baulies* are given a spring cleaning, to be followed by worship of the *Nagas* on the morrow, when rice and floral offerings are made to them.

SINGH SANKRANT

Sankranti or the beginning of a month (in *Bikrami* era) is regarded as sacred by Hindus in many places. So is the case in Jammu where many, especially ladies, go to the rivers and streams for a bath in the morning and observe a fast for the day.

The first of *Bhadoon*, known as *Singh Sankrant* (*Simha Sankrant*), is highly regarded by people in Ramban and the adjoining villages. People go to river Chenab or Chandrabhaga in the morning, have a dip in its waters and make floral offerings to it. According to popular belief a bath in the river on this occasion is as meritorious as in the Ganga at Hardwar. Local tradition traces the origin of the festival to the time of the *Pandavas* about 3500 years ago.

NAVRATRAS

But the maximum devotion and festivity are witnessed during the *Navratras* when the city is flooded with thousands of pilgrims on their way to or back from the Vaishno Devi shrine. Throughout the *Navratras* people in their thousands flock the various other Shakti

shrines in different parts of the province where *Yajnas* are performed on *Ashtami*.

The city of Jammu wears a gala appearance. The city streets are dotted with returning pilgrims from Vaishno Devi with staff in hand and wearing *mauli* (knots of red and white thread) around their necks.

During the spring *Navratras*, the crescendo of the celebrations is reached at the shrine of the Devi in Bahu Fort on *Ashtami* and in the city itself in the Raghunath Mandir on *Navmi*.

RAMNAVMI

On *Ram Navmi*, the Dogra rulers would personally visit the Rughnath temple to offer worship to Sri Rama, their patron-deity. The ruler would drive in state to the temple and the people would greet him as he passed through the tastefully decorated street. Images of Sri Rama, Lakshman and Sita and a number of tableaux depicting scenes from the *Ramayana* are taken out in a gorgeous procession. Thousands of people join the procession, including those then in town in connection with the Vaishno Devi pilgrimage.

Besides worship and offerings to the deity inside the temple, there are discourses on Bhagwan Ram's life and the *Ramayana*. Such discourses are in fact a daily feature in the temple during the *Navratras*, during the month of *Magha* and also on various important festivals.

Ram Navmi celebrations in the Rughnath Mandir are conducted by the Dharmarth Trust, which distributes *ladoos* in plenty on the occasion as *prasad*.

RAMLILA AND DUSSEHRA

Apart from the Vaishno Devi Yatra which begins and is at its peak during the autumn *Navratras*, these days are undoubtedly the most joyous period of the year for the people. Make-shift stages are put up where stages do not exist and *Ram Lila* is enacted to the great joy and edification of the people. The festival reaches its climax in the *Dussehra* when Ravana and his kin are laid to rest finally. Thousands gather to witness the burning of their effigies in Jammu and other towns.

BAISAKHI

Baisakhi or New year's Day of the *Bikrami* era is also celebrated with great enthusiasm all over the province. *Melas* are held in all the principal towns. People bathe in the waters of the sacred rivers, streams and springs and offer worship in the temples. The *melas* held at Jammu, Kathua (Ervan) Billawar (Hari-Hara temple) Basohli (Nilakanth Mahadev), Devika (Purmandal), Reasi, Ramnagar, and Udhampur are particularly deserving of mention.

The devotional part of the *mela* is over in the morning itself. Thereafter the people give themselves up to jollity and rejoicing. Troupes of village dancers converge on the towns and the people enjoy their dances, mostly *bhangra*. Village bards sing ballads and heroic lays to the accompaniment of single stringed instruments known as *kim* and *sarangis*. There are wrestling matches and trials of strength in other ways, besides merry-go-rounds, etc. for the entertainment of children and the fair sex. Temporary bazars spring up where villagers, particularly women, make a lot of purchases.

The fairs held at Udhampur and Mansar last three days.

OTHER FESTIVALS

Other festivals such as *Holi*, *Dewali*, the *Ids*, the *Gurparabs*, *Janam Ashtami*, *Mahavir Jayanti* and Christmas are also celebrated, as in other parts of the country. But there are some fairs and festivals which are peculiar to the province or rather its hilly areas.

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FESTIVALS IN THE HILLS

MOST of the festivals which are peculiar to Jammu Province only are held mainly in the Bhadrawah-Kishtwar area.

Bhadrawah may well be called a locality of fairs and festivals. These are held during the harvest season. This is the time of the year when in the hills the major crops are ripe and people are happy with their toilsome lot.

These *melas* are locally known as *Kud* or *Jatra*. They are festive occasions keenly looked forward to and celebrated with great enthusiasm. On these days the people give themselves up to festivity and in a spirit of gay abandon entertain their friends and relations lavishly. Most of the fairs are held at night.

MELA PATT

The most important fair is the one known as *Mela Patt* or *Pateru Kud*. This is a day-time fair. It is celebrated in the heart of Bhadrawah town where once stood, in all grandeur and dignity, the palaces of the rulers of this peaceful principality. The *mela* or *kud* takes place fifteen days after the *Kailash Yatra* and lasts for three days. It falls in the month of August or September. All the three days of the fair are days of public festivity and rejoicing. There is great pomp and show in and around the venue of the fair which is no other than the compound of Vasuki Nag temple. Hindus and Muslims, rich and poor, high and low, young and old, come to witness it from all over the Tehsil and beyond it.

The fair starts about 4 o'clock daily and ends with the sunset. The *Patt* represents the silken robes of honour which a Bhadrawah chief was awarded by the Great Moghul in the sixteenth century A.D. These are mounted on a wooden frame which is borne by a *chela* i.e., 'one possessed' who has practised austerities and penance for some days before the event and is believed to be in communion with the god or deity. *Patt* is conical in shape and

bedecked with multi-coloured pieces of cloth. The dance is performed to the harmonious beat of drums, playing of flutes and blowing of horns.

The man carrying the *Patt* is brought from the house of Raj-Gurus (former royal priests) in a procession led by the musicians to the dancing compound. He dances several rounds of the dance with the *Patt* overhead. When he is tired, he gives an indication by tossing the *Patt* sideways. The persons moving round then hold the *Patt* and he sits down. After resting he again dons the *Patt* and resumes the dance. Slogans *Nagraj Vasuki ki Jai*, etc., are raised and hymns in praise of the deity, Vasuk, are sung. The people in colourful dresses, shower flowers on it. The *Patt* is taken back in procession at the termination of the dance.

Formerly in the time of Rajas of Bhadrawah and Chamba, as also during the time of the Dogras, the fair was managed by the local administration, which met all its expenses. But now it is managed by the people who raise voluntary contributions from among themselves. The days of the fair are, however, as before, public holidays in Bhadrawah Tehsil.

ORIGIN OF THE MELA

Mela Patt has an interesting origin. Tradition connects it with the illustrious Raja Nagpal of Bhadrawah and his great Indian contemporary, Akbar (1556-1605 A.D.). It is said that the Bhadrawah chieftain was once invited to the Imperial Court together with other princes in the realm, for a *darbar* or convention. Nagpal was a pious and enlightened prince. But when he went before the Great Moghul he did not bend or bow like the other potentates but just saluted. This was not liked. The 'haughty' prince was again summoned to the Court next day but it had been arranged that he would have to pass through a low door so that he would automatically have to bow his head. But the Raja was not to be beaten. Instead of entering the door, head first, he threw in his legs first and then moved in the body, thus maintaining his head erect. The whole Court was surprised and he was asked to explain why he did not do proper obeisance to the mighty ruler of India. Nagpal said that he was a devotee of Nagraj Vasuki and bowed before none but him.

Nagpal was asked if he could demonstrate the greatness of his *kuldevta* in some way. The Bhadrawah prince asked for a day's interval. That night, before going to bed, he prayed to his Lord intensively. During sleep Nagraj Vasuki appeared to him in a dream and told him not to be perturbed but to go to the Court with his turban loosely tied. Next day when he appeared before the Emperor a ferocious hooded snake leapt forth from his turban and began moving towards the throne. The whole Court was seized with panic and he was asked to take away the serpent. He was given gold and silver ornaments and silken robes of honour (*Patt*) before he went away.

According to a slightly different version, the incident had a different origin. It is said that on the morrow of their arrival at the Imperial Capital the Raja's attendant went to draw water from the royal well early in the morning. The Emperor's attendants were also there. But the Bhadrawah Chief's attendant insisted that he would draw the water first. This resulted in an altercation. The royal attendants reported the matter. Nagpal's servant was sent for and his explanation sought. He said that he wanted the water for his master who had to worship his *Kuldevta*, and he could not let it be defiled with any one's touch. Nagpal was therefore summoned to the Court.

On his triumphant return home, Nagpal wanted to show what he had got to his subjects. But he did not call them all for the purpose on the same day for fear lest some neighbouring prince should mount an attack. So he called them on three different days from the three different areas of his realm. That explains why the festival is held for three days.

The event does not find corroboration in any contemporary Moghul records or chronicles. But the tradition is alive and cannot be easily dismissed. In any case, it is symbolic of the high sense of self respect of the Bhadrawahis and their faith in Nagraj Vasuki.

The *mela* is the theme of popular poems in the area. A well-known local poet, Jan Mahammad Tishna writes:

“Mela Patt in our Bhadrawah is every summer held;
By boys and girls, young and old, it is beheld.
King was honoured with no ‘Salaam’;
Lords were offered no “Ram, Ram!”

Mela Patt, though the most important of the *melas* or *kuds* held in Bhadrawah, is not the only one which draws large numbers of people. Another important *mela* is held at Subardhar.

MELA AT SUBARDHAR

The *mela* at Subardhar Nag temple is held one day before or after *Baisakhi*. This is in fact the first *Kud* held after the cold spell of the winter is over. The advent of warm weather injects a new spirit and enthusiasm in the people and they get together at Subardhar Nag temple to celebrate the event. A popular song in connection with the festival begins:

“My love, do come to the Subardhar *mela* so that after the long severe winter I see thy face again”.

Subardhar is about half a dozen miles away from Bhadrawah town. There is a black-stone image of Nag Devta in the temple. Legend has it that a shepherd found the image lying in the forest. A voice from the un-known asked him to lift it and carry it up the mountain. But he could carry it to the present location only and could not lift it again when he tried. So it was thought that the Naga wanted to be installed there. A temple was therefore built over it. Subardhar Nag is another name of Sheshnag.

KISHTWAR JATRAS

Melas are not peculiar to Bhadrawah only; they are held in Kishtwar too. A *mela* which comprises a procession and dance also is known as *jatra*. *Jatras* are seasonal festivals, usually held when crops have been gathered and people have little to do. The main *Jatra* held in Kishtwar town used to be a very elaborate affair. It lasted from about the close of *Bhadoo*n to the end of *Assuj*. The *jatra* began with a visit to the temple of *Ashtadashabhuja* by the revellers in village Hatta. Other shrines visited by them on different days included the temple of Nilkanth Mahadev and *Durgahs* of Asrari Sharif and Baba Farid-ud-Din. The dancers and actors who, according to one Muslim writer, used to be Muslims performed before these shrines. Earlier they must have been Hindus. The dancers were fed at public expense. A day was devoted to ram fights in the *chenar*-fringed spacious *chaugan* in the

town, followed by singing and dancing. On another day an effigy of an elephant would be made in the middle of the *chaugan*, around which the revellers would dance and sing. This festival known as Katak Jatra held in Bhadoon-Assuj commemorated the victory of Kishtwar over a Raja of Basohli. A hole in a rock in the middle of the *chaugan* was called *Hastigand* i.e. place where the elephant was tied or tethered. People would invite and entertain their friends and relatives. Another type of *Jatra* would be held at the beginning of the sowing season in *Phalguna*. This would last nine days. The festival preceded the beginning of agricultural operations. On one day in particular the people would take *thalis* full of cooked preparations into the fields and distribute them among children. A pointed pole or stick, covered in wool and embellished with leaves and flowers would then be struck into the ground, marking the beginning of tilling operations.

Mention has already been made of the *jatra* held at the Sarthal Devi shrine where a sheep or goat is also sacrificed. A similar *mela* used to be held near Sudh Mahadev in the middle of August. The fair lasted but one day. The procession started from the temple of Kurchant Devta about half a mile from Sudh Mahadev and was attended by thousands of people. Here is a description of the *mela*:

“The entertainment part of the fair starts after dusk when the participants march towards Sudh Mahadev in a procession accompanied by playing of flutes and beating of drums. The half mile long route is illuminated by torch bearers who carry burning wooden splinters obtained from the trunks of pine trees. Although the distance to be covered is fairly short, the processionists walk at a slow pace and do not reach Sudh Mahadev before midnight. On arrival, they pay homage to Lord Shiva. Then they return and assemble in an open space in the village where a fire has been lit in advance. The dance is performed around this fire, the dancers being dressed uniformly with tufts in their hair. They make rhythmic movements to the beating of drums and other instruments. They start slowly but gather momentum gradually. The dances thus become ecstatic and throw a spell over the audience who respond with movements of their limbs. The concert comes to an end in the small hours of the morning.”

A noteworthy feature of the *jatras* is the *chela* who, as already

observed, is one believed to be "possessed" and "in communion with the deity" in whose honour the mela or *jatra* is held. The *chela* is expected to lead an austere life and to undergo penance and fasts occasionally to keep up his communion with his deity.

The *chela* was an important member of the community. His help was sought in difficulties and troubles like drought, famine, disease and pestilences when he would dance till he got into a frenzy. It was in this state of ecstasy that he would be able to divine the cause of the calamity and the remedy for the same. He would also forecast the future. At some of the dances such as the one at Sarthal already referred to, the *chelas* develop such extraordinary powers that they can walk on glowing hot embers without any burn or injury.

A number of fairs and festivals are held in some villages along the Dhar-Udhampur road at the height of summer. Two of the most colourful of these are held in the month of June at Therakalwal and Ramkot. The former is in memory of the lady-martyr, Bua Bagan, while the latter is marked by lively folk dances and wrestling matches in which wrestlers from Jammu and Punjab participate. Another colourful festival is held at the beautiful hill resort of Duggan, situated at an elevation of about 5000 feet and some 20 kms north of Mandli, on the Dhar-Udhampur road. The place abounds in sweet-water springs and fir and deodar trees. This colourful festival takes place on the eleventh of *Ashad*.

* * * *

By sacrificing all to *Isvara* comes *samadhi*.

Yoga Sutra

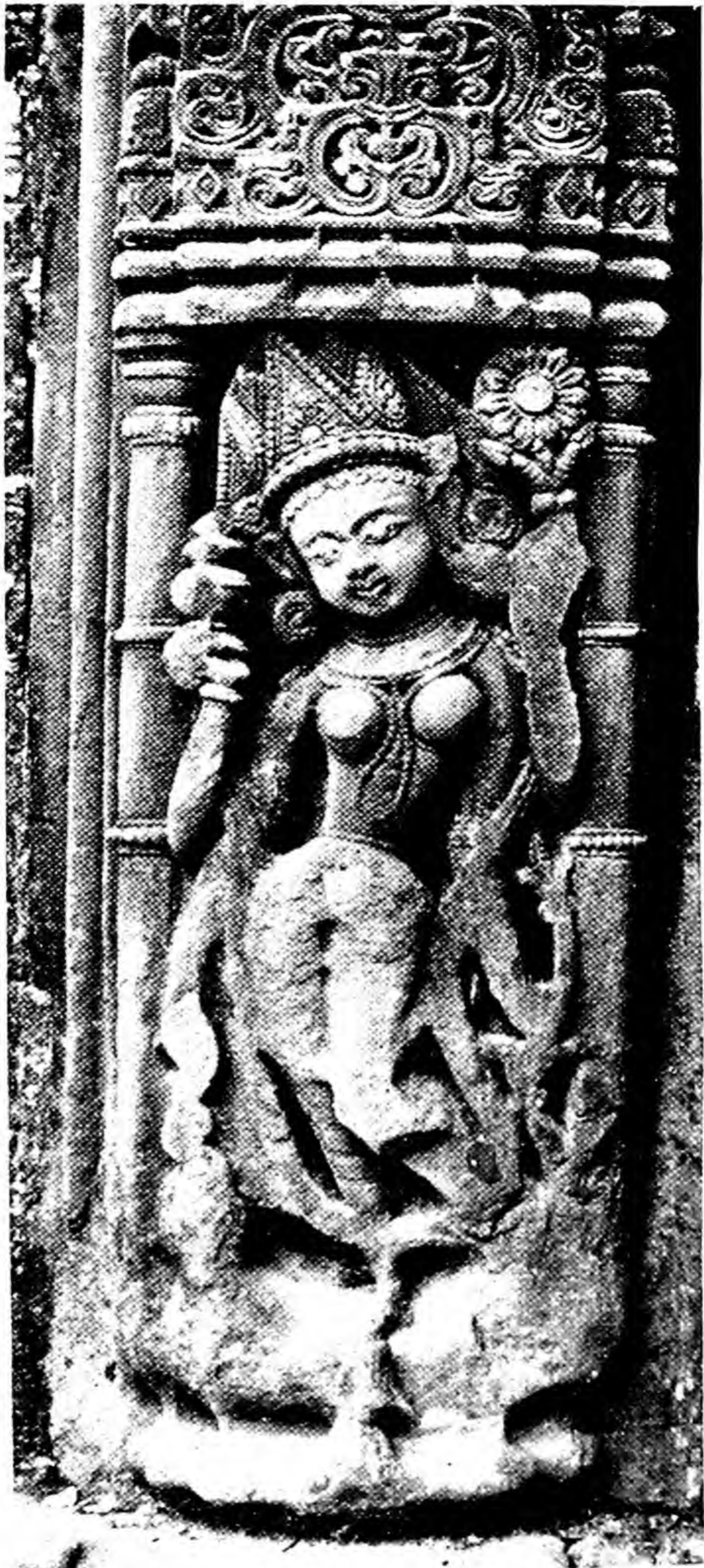
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Hari-Hara, Basohli Painting (Courtesy: National Museum).



Ganga Image, Babor.



Durga (Painting : Dogra Art Gallery)



Panel in Sati Temple, Ramnagar.



Kaladehra Temple Ruins, Babor.

ANCIENT TEMPLES

Like other parts of India, Jammu has its own ancient monuments, mostly temples. They are all situated on the old routes that connected the territory with Chamba, Nurpur and other principalities now forming parts of Himachal Pradesh, or those that passed through it to Kashmir.

HARI-HARA TEMPLE

Mention has already been made of the Shiva temple at Billawar which is still the object of worship by the devotees. The temple, now known as Bilkeshwar, was originally known as the temple of Hari-Hara, dedicated as it was to both. This made it one of the most remarkable temples in the country where both Shiva and Vishnu were worshipped together. Maybe the temple deity was two-faced as in the painting from Basohli. The temple represented a climax in religious and cultural synthesis. Even today when the temple is visited mainly as a Shiva shrine, we find images of both Shiva and Vishnu among the dozen or so sculptures in it. There are images of Brahma, Bhairava and Ganesh also.

A curious superstition attached to the temple. According to it, the fall of a brick from its outer gateway presaged the death of the ruler or a member of the ruling family. This belief is stated to have been so strong that the early Dogra rulers had instructed the local officials to take good care of the temple and report immediately if or when a brick came down. And when such an occurrence did actually take place a *havan* or *yajna* would be performed to avert the impending disaster. But now both the gateway and the princes are no more.

This clever stratagem appears to have been invented by some intelligent priest or devotees to arrest the rapid decline of the temple. For the prince would much rather keep the temple in good repair than undertake costly *yagnas* and rituals to avert disaster once a brick had fallen.

Billawar is situated some 22 miles from Basohli, where we have already noticed the existence of an ancient cave on the bank of the Ravi and some temples. Some time ago, a beautiful *Trimurti* image was salvaged from Mahadhera near Basohli town. The image which is about four feet high is in the Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu.

BABOR

Manwal is a beautiful little village about 30 miles north of the point at which the road to Billawar branches off the Dhar-Udhampur Road. Close by lies Babor with the remains of what were the best stone structures in the province.

Babor which is about two dozen miles east of Jammu city as the crow flies and about a dozen miles from Mansar, had a temple complex, comparable to the one which the great Kashmir ruler, Lalitaditya, built at Wangat at the foot of Harmukh mountain in Kashmir in the eighth century A.D.

Only half a dozen temples have been traced, but there might have been some more though of them little now remains. But what remains is sufficient to indicate what a marvel of art and architecture had been created in this till recently unknown place.

The remains are actually to be found in two adjacent villages of Thalora and Babor. But they are now referred to under the common appellation of Babor only. The ruins are structures of great solidity and considerable beauty. Some of the stones and rafters used in their construction are over a dozen feet long and their sculptures and carvings are superb.

Of the structures whose ruins yet remain, as though to testify to the grandeur of the originals, only three have been identified though not with certainty. Two of these, which have continued to be resorted to by the villagers in the neighbourhood for purposes of worship, have been identified as temples of the Devi and her Lord, Shiva. The temples have been described in detail by Kashmir's great archaeologist, R.B. Ram Chandra Kak, who rose to be the State's Prime Minister under Maharaja Hari Singh.

DEVI'S SHRINE

The Devi's temple is a highly ornate structure. It comprised a single-chamber sanctuary with a *mandapa* in front. The roof of

the *mandap* was held up by fluted columns supporting beams of stone 10 feet in length. The whole structure stood in a courtyard, 35 feet by 25 feet. One had to get down to it by a few stone steps as it was lower than the surrounding ground. The sanctum measured seven and a half feet square on the inside though externally it was 20 feet square at the base.

The temple walls were richly carved on the outside with divine figures and sacred motifs. In between lay niches with stepped up pedimental roofs, containing images of gods and goddesses. But they are all empty now. Some of the carvings on the portal of the sanctuary, however, remain. One of these still decipherable, is an exquisite figure of the river goddess *Ganga*, on the jamb of the portal. The other one, completely obliterated, must obviously have been of *Yamuna*. Both stood on the snouts of crocodiles. The lintel bore the *Navagrahas* in bas relief.

The temple courtyard is littered with dressed and carved stones fallen from the temple. Two of these, almost as big as the one which carries the *Ganga* image, bear images of *Ganesh* and *Bhairava*. The former is badly damaged while the latter is still in good condition.

The identification of this temple as a Devi shrine is by no means certain; it might as well have been a Shiva temple, or more probably, a temple of Shiva and Shakti both. For the temple precincts have yielded other figures, among them a life-size head of Shiva. Figures of Vishnu and Lakshmi and Annapoorna have also been found.

SHIVA TEMPLE

While the Devi's temple was built in Thalora, the Shiva shrine was at Babor proper. This temple was also elaborately carved with sacred images, motifs and designs. The principal object of worship was a *Lingam*, behind which in a niche in the back wall was a beautiful monolithic statue of *Shiva-Trimurti* with his consort, *Parvati*.

The temple was a double-storied structure with a dome-shaped top and appears to have had aisles on different sides. The outer walls were profusely decorated. The carvings represented, besides others, *Vishnu* reclining on *Shesha*, *Krishna* playing on the flute, *Narasimha* tearing open the entrails of a demon. Rats and peacocks, —mounts respectively of *Ganesh* and *Kumar* (*Karttikeya*),

sons of Shiva and Parvati, were also there. The temple had a *mandapa* in front. The entrance lay through a low porch supported by fluted columns, beautifully decorated with bell and chain etc., etc. The lintel was adorned with a figure of *Ganesha*. The main carving of Shiva and Parvati, made of black stone, was a masterpiece.

KALADHERA

The two temples just described were not the biggest. There were two bigger temples, one behind the Devi's shrine and the other beyond Shiva's. The latter which also is in ruins cannot be identified as it has no deity inside. Called *Kaladhera* it is now a roofless structure about 50 feet by 20 feet. Though less ornate than the other temples, it also has a big roofed *mandapa* before it.

The temple might have been dedicated to the great god Shiva in his destructive aspect, i.e., *Mahakala*; hence its present name of *Kaladhera*. It is also described as "The black temple," possibly from the black stones used in its construction.

The biggest and the best temple of the whole lot appears to have been behind the Devi's shrine. It was a massive pile, majestic even in its ruins. Built on an elevated basement, it consisted of two principal square sanctuaries with an extensive and elaborately carved *mandapa* in front.

The roof was supported on two rows of 24 fluted columns surmounted with elephant heads, etc., etc. The lintel bore a four-armed figure of *Ganesha*. The whole edifice lay in a stone-paved courtyard which extended several feet beyond the temple walls. This too appears to have been a Shiva shrine. Two Shiva heads, one and a half feet high, have been found in the debris. These are elaborately carved.

Another Shiva temple lay beyond the *Kaladhera* to its north-east but of that little remains. The *mandapa* debris, however, yielded two interesting representations of the dancing Shiva, each with an attendant beating a drum. The sixth temple was near the Devi's shrine. Though smaller in size it was also richly carved.

KIRMCHI

There was another temple complex at Kirmchi, nearly half a dozen miles north-west of Udhampur. Kirmchi is a small village

nestled among green hills one of which was crowned with a fort. The village stands in a beautiful valley of the same name with a small stream flowing below it. Nearby are three old temples in a row facing east, one of them almost a heap of rubble. There seem to have been two more parallel to them in the east, facing the two temples on the outside, thus completing a quadrangular pattern. But of them no trace remains now.

In shape and style these temples resemble the Baijnath and some other temples in the Kangra valley, and the Lingaraja temple at Bhuvaneshwar (Orissa).

The main temple is copiously decorated with abstract designs and contained some niches. The temple which is 50 feet high stands on a grand entablature. The temple porch bears a close resemblance to ancient stone temples of Kashmir. Some stone slabs made use of in their construction, particularly those used as beams, measure as many as 12 feet in length and rest on equally massive pillars. The other temples also stood on high plinths with spacious *mandaps* in front which were reached by a flight of steps.

There is no knowing as to whom the temples were dedicated, though pieces of sculpture found in the debris have yielded figures of Ganesh, Shiva-Trimurti, and Vishnu. Local tradition would connect them with the Mahabharata warrior, Kechak, who met his death at the hands of Bhima, because he made indecent overtures to Dhraupadi. But certainly the temples cannot be that old. Nor can they be of the time of Kanishka (second century A.D.), though there is a tradition that they were got built by the Kushan ruler when he was on his way to Kashmir. Kanishka might possibly have founded a Buddhist establishment in this idyllic spot, but no trace of that remains now.

BUDDHIST MONASTERY AT AMBARAN

One of the enigmas of Jammu's religious history has been the absence of any Buddhist foundations or remains in the province. The puzzle was all the more surprising because in ancient times Buddhism had one of its prominent seats in the vicinity of Jammu. This was at Sialkot (now in Pakistan) hardly two dozen miles away. It was in fact at Sialkot (then known as Sakala), that the Indo-

Greek king Menandar or Milinda was won over to the faith by the celebrated monk Nagasena in the second century B.C. What a striking resemblance the name bears to Nagseni area of Padar (Kishtwar) which still has some Buddhists living in it! One is tempted to think that Nagseni is derived from his name.

According to Ishrat Kashmiri there is a rock by the side of a tank next to the bridge on the Chenab at Bandarkote which bears an inscription. He thinks that it is a Buddhist inscription in Pali.

But this is only conjectural. Positive evidence of the existence of a Buddhist establishment at Ambaran near Akhnoor, 20 miles west of Jammu, was brought to light only a few decades ago. The late Dr. Charles Fabri, an eminent art critic, who made a detailed examination of the site and the remains that were found came to the conclusion that there had been a large monastery and a stupa at the place. Among the terra-cottas found were, besides Buddha heads, torsos of bodies and pieces of drapery belonging to Buddha figures or figures of monks and laymen and women profusely decorated. He considered the Akhnoor terra cottas technically superb.

These terra-cotta Buddha heads etc., which have been assigned to the 5th-7th century A.D., are closely related to the terra-cottas unearthed at Ushkur, (ancient Huvishkapura), near Baramulla in Kashmir.

Buddhism, it may be mentioned here in passing, witnessed its Golden Age in Kashmir during the time of the Kushans; Hushka, Jushka and Kanishka. And we have already noted how Kirmchi is, according to a local tradition, believed to have been founded by the great Kushan king Kanishka, who convened the fourth Great Buddhist Council in Kashmir.

That Buddhism was prevalent in these areas at one time is indicated by some of the place names. Udhampur, which is just east of Kirmchi was known as Buddhapur till about a hundred and twenty five years ago. According to Thakur Khan Chand Billawaria, author of the *Tarikh-i-Rajagan-i-Jammu* Udhampur was known as Budhapur till Maharaja Gulab Singh named it as such after his son, Udham Singh. Badwani in Samba is said to be derived from Buddha-vani.

Buddhism, it appears, had travelled farther up from Ambaran (Akhnoor) along the course of the Chenab. For even now we find

villages named Deva, Sanghaldan (derived obviously from *Sanghadan* or gift to Sangha) and Dhammakund as we go from Gool-Gulabgarh to Ramban on the national highway, though they are no longer Buddhist. (Dhammakund is 32 kms from Ramban and Sangaldan a further 14 kms beyond).

OLD MOSQUES

The Moghuls built a number of *serais* on the old route to Kashmir. Some of them contained mosques and mausoleums. The Chingas *serai*, situated halfway between Naushera and Rajouri which commands a magnificent view of the Pir Panchal Range, has already been referred to. It contains Jahangir's grave in which the Emperor's entrails were buried when he died on his way back from Kashmir in 1821 A.D.

A mosque was built at Mastgarh in the heart of Jammu city by the early Dogra ruler Ranjit Dev for the Muslims who were settled in the town in his time. It was known as Mastgarh mosque. It was perhaps rebuilt later and measured 70' x 28'; the roof comprised three domes with metal finials.

There is a mosque of Jahangir's time at Rajouri. Another mosque known as Andhrakot masjid is stated to have been built by a native Muslim Rajput Chief, Yusuf Khan.

There are some old mosques in Poonch also. These include Masjid-i-Ditu Wazirni and Nizam-u-Din's mosque.

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You can repair or rebuild a temple or a mosque but not a broken heart.

Sikh Guru

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turn
shopping
into
TREASURE

buy
INDIAN
HANDICRAFTS

DEVOTIONAL ARTS

“The image merely as such is of no value, all depends on what he does who looks at it; what is expected of him is an act of contemplation (Yoga).....”

Saddharmapundarika

“A symbol does not subject the infinite to the finite, but renders the finite transparent. It aids us to see the infinite through it.”

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

Most faiths agree that in the beginning was One who of his own will became the many. This created, in course to time, a corresponding urge in the created, to revert to the Origin, to recapture the original Oneness. This quest for God or Truth is the underlying principle of all the great religions of the world. Search for the Real or the Truth has been the preoccupation of the best among human beings at all times, and in all climes and countries. And in this quest Man has left nothing undone. He has left hearth and home; he has undertaken pilgrimages to distant places and dizzy heights and cheerfully borne the hardships of inclement weather and rough terrain; he has built temples and shrines and embellished them with masterpieces of art and sculpture; he has invented lilting cadences and soul-stirring symphonies, he has produced bewitching music and uplifting poetry. All this has been done in Jammu also, as in other parts of the country.

SCULPTURE & ARCHITECTURE

We have noticed the first beginnings in the field of sculpture in the Visvesvara cave on the bank of the Ravi at Basohli which

contained a number of carved images including those of *Shiva*, *Mahishasurmardini* and *Brahma*, besides others. A remarkable image worshipped at Basohli was that of *Chamunda*. It was a piece of natural rock and seems to have been worshipped before image-making became the vogue. Perhaps this sacred piece of rock had been brought from somewhere else. The temple built over it later consisted of a small sanctum surmounted by a *shikhara* type tower.

The apogee of the skill in the field of devotional arts in Jammu was reached in the temples of Billawar, Kirmchi and Babor. Here, especially at Babor, was created something which could hold its own against similar constructions elsewhere.

The Babor temple complex was as grand in conception as it was masterly in execution. The biggest temple (behind the Devi shrine) was, in plan, as Kak points out, a triple star on a rectangular basement. The roof of the *mandapa* was supported on two rows of 24 columns, standing on well mounted bases and surmounted by carved capitals.

There were two parallel groups of temples in two adjoining villages. Built on grand entablatures and with massive stones they were the most conspicuous objects in the area. Besides the sanctuaries, they had big pillared halls or *mandaps* in front for the devotees to sit and join in mass prayers or listen to religious discourses by the priests and savants. The temple walls were alive with rich imagery. They contained, so to say, sermons in stones. Though helpless victims of vandalism and the ravages of time, the temples ruins still have something left to show the heights attained by the artistic skill of the master-craftsmen who built them.

The Ganga figure in the left jamb of the porch to the Devi's temple is an extremely well-modelled figure, with attenuated waist and swelling breasts between which hangs down to the navel a long necklace. She wears a three-peaked tiara and her rounded face, with long eyelashes and eyebrows, is exquisitely sculptured.

Kak waxes equally eloquent about the Shiva-Parvati panel in the Shiva temple:

"It represents Siva and Parvati standing. Siva is three-headed... profusely ornamented and wears a three-peaked, jewelled crown... By his side stands Parvati with wavy hair, large circular ear-rings (*bal*) a thickly studded pearl necklace

hanging down between her breasts. The graceful modelling of her form—her slender waist, her arms and be-ringed hands—is exquisite, she also wears a three-peaked jewelled crown and a long flower garland. Her hair hangs in braids on her back. At the feet of the parents are Ganesha with his trunk on the eternal sweet-meat pot, and Karttikeya, holding a lance”.

This group is wonderfully well-carved and, as he adds, bears comparison with the best specimens of the mediaeval sculptor's art in India.

The figure of Bhairava is also impressive. He too is elaborately dressed and ornamented, and, as behoves the Lord of Death, he wears a jewelled crown and carries a trident, a skull and a pot of blood. He is three-eyed and wears a curly beard and a twisted moustache. Significantly he stands with teeth bared and a thunder-bolt in hand.

The figures of dancing Shiva found in the debris of the temple beyond the Kaladhera are also wonderful. The god is three-headed and richly ornamented. In one figure the dancing god is shown with ten arms and in the other with eight only. In both, however, he has an attendant, beating a large drum in accompaniment.

It is a matter of profound regret that nothing should be known about who built these temples and when. But their donors do not seem to have been keen to remain anonymous. Kak has noted that there were figures of a bearded male and a two-armed female, clad in a close-clinging gown and scarf, on the jambs of the doorway to the Devi's temple. He rightly feels that they may be the donors of the temple. Suraj Saraf, a Jammu journalist who has also written a pamphlet on Babor, noticed what he calls a very strange miniature figure, hardly noticeable ordinarily, carved on the threshold of the entrance to the Devi's shrine. "It looks like an old man with a bent head, flowing beard and moustaches and hands raised upward above head as if supporting the entire edifice of the building". This again appears to have been the donor. But while these representations were enough for their contemporaries they, as also the remnants of a few inscriptions found, make us no wiser in regard to the donors' identity.

Be that as it may, the influence of Kashmir on the art and architecture of Babor is unmistakable. Following Lalitaditya's wide-ranging conquests, the supremacy of Kashmir was acknow-

ledged all over north-western India from the eighth century onwards till the advent of Muslim rule. Kashmir had intimate relations and intercourse with Balor (Basohli) then known as Vallapura and Babor which was then designated as Babbapura. In fact the only rulers of the latter principality known to history, namely Kirtiraja and Kirtidhara were intimately connected with the ruling family of Kashmir. Kirtiraja's daughter and Kirtidhara's sister, Bhuvanamati, was married to Kalasa (1063-1089) A.D. whose coin has significantly been found in the debris in one of the temples at Babor. His father Ananta (1028-1063 A.D.) was a powerful prince who overthrew the ruler of Chamba and placed another prince on the throne in his place.

Kalhana has recorded a formal visit to the Kashmir capital of Kirtidhara, ruler of Babbapura, when in the winter of 1087-88 A.D. rulers of eight adjoining principalities gathered at Srinagar in response to an invitation from their suzerain, Kalasa.

Kalasa's mother, Suryamati, wife of Ananta, was a princess of Trigarta. She erected a temple in Chamba which was conquered by her husband. It is not unlikely that she might have constructed one or two at Babor also. There is greater reason to believe that her daughter-in-law, who was a princess of Babor, may have built one or more in her parental principality, after the manner of her pious mother-in-law. So might have her husband Kalasa, who like his illustrious mother is known to have put up a number of religious foundations and temples. Or, was it that the rich and impressive heritage of Kashmir inspired Kirtiraja and Kirtidhara to put up temples of their own in their capital? In any case the builders of the temples appear to have come from Kashmir which alone among the States of north-western India at that time had a rich and living tradition of temple architecture.

The people's devotion to the gods and goddesses was not expressed in sculpture and images in the temples only. Slabs bearing such images were embedded in the stoneworks and embankments built around *baulis* and springs which the devotees visited daily for bath and ablutions. The *Papnashni* spring below the Durga temple at Sudh Mahadev has a number of such decorated slabs. Two of these represent Vishnu in his half-man half-fish incarnation i.e., as *Matsya Avatar* and as *Sheshasayi* i.e., Vishnu reclining on *Shesha* with his consort Lakshmi sitting at his feet.

From his navel springs a lotus on which is seated *Brahma* with the four *Vedas* in his hands.

Similar representations are to be found in *bauli* walls at Sukral, Billawar, and Manwal. Some of the other figures found are those of the sun and the moon, the monkey-god Hanuman, four-armed Narasimha and four-armed Durga riding a lion, besides trees, snakes and geese. The most repeated figures are those of Vishnu, Shiva and Nagraj (coiled serpent). At some places the *bauli* walls would contain niches with images of Shiva and Parvati seated side by side.

The temples at Billawar and Kirmchi, though they too have similarities with the Kashmir temples, have much greater affinity with the temples of Chamba and Kangra. The same is the case with the temple of Malla at Sukral. The images inside the temples, however, and in particular the triple-headed images of Shiva and Vishnu are remarkably similar to their Kashmir prototypes.

Except for the temple at Sukral, we know nothing about who built the others and when. On stylistic and other grounds the temple of Billawar is assigned to about 1000 A.D. The temples at Krimchi are also not far removed from that time.

There is at present no definite indication about how these temples were destroyed. Most probably the first fatal blow was delivered by some fanatical invader but thereafter the work of destruction was done by time. A great weakness of Babor architecture was that the big blocks of stone which were used in construction were not joined together with any mortar or other cementing material. They were just placed one on top of the other and were therefore easily displaced or thrown down in earthquake.

Two temples put up in later times that we come across are to be found at Mahanpur, which is about a dozen miles from Basohli. One of these was of Shiva and other of the Devi. According to Kak, the latter bore an inscription dating it to 1626 A.D. It stated that the temple was constructed by one Kripalu Chowdhri, Superintendent of Stores of Raja Rai Man Singh.

PAINING

Temple construction is a costly affair and needs lot of resources and material. They also take a lot of time to construct. Stone

temple construction appears to have fallen greatly into disuse after the first iconoclastic invaders set their foot on the soil of the land.

The devotional impulse of the people could, however, not be held in check. It soon found a new and less costly medium in painting when a mighty wave of devotional fervour swept northern India from end to end.

Early in the eighteenth century A.D. Basohli emerged as a great centre of painting; so much so that Basohli is now a renowned name on the artistic map of the this country. It has given to us a distinct school of art, known after itself as the Basohli School of Painting.

Basohli painting may well be described as the pictorial expression of *Bhakti* movement. According to Dr. Herman Goetz, Basohli paintings are among "the great achievements of Indian, nay, of human art".

The themes of Basohli paintings are mostly *dharmic*. They have been taken from the epics and the *Puranas*, notably the *Bhagavata Purana*, and other sacred texts. The *Gita Govinda* of Jayadeva, a 12th century poet, and *Rasamanjari* of Bhanu Datta (14th century) were great favourites with Basohli artists. A collection of *Gita Govinda* paintings is stated to have been painted by one Manaku, a devotee of Vishnu at the behest of Raja Ranjit Dev in the first quarter (1730) of the 18th century A.D.

In both the series, the Sanskrit verses are written on the back—in *takri*, a script closely allied to the Sharada script of Kashmir. Some of the paintings are Shaivaistic in theme.

The paintings depict Krishna's frolics and scenes from the *Ramayana* and other Sanskrit texts. Even the *ragas* and *raginis* (i.e., musical modes) have been rendered in colour; so also months of the year (*Barahmasa*) but the treatment again is *dharmic*. The artists tried to overcome the limitations of their spatial medium by developing various themes in a series of pictures. This gave the artist a larger canvas while allowing him free scope to depict individual scenes in considerable detail. Thus each series got an architectonic coherence and an epic quality.

An interesting picture series that has come down to us is the *Chittarasamanjari*. According to its colophon, it was got prepared by Raja Kirpal Pal (1687-93 A.D.) "in order to see the creation of

God and to realise the hollowness of the world". It was drawn by Devidasa of Basohli who is stated to have been "well versed in the art of painting". *Rasamanjari* was a Sanskrit work by Bhanu Datta with *Rasa* of "flavour of love" as the hero. Krishna appears to have been introduced at the instance of Kripal Pal himself. In the words of Mr. W. G. Archer, well known art critic, "The *Rasamanjari* miniatures represent some of the best in the Indian miniature paintings".

The art of painting appears to have had a continuous run of about two centuries in Basohli. A subsequent Raja, Medni Pal (1863-70), added a "Hall of Colour" (Rang Mahal) to the magnificent palace at Basohli. Its walls were decorated with paintings and frescoes.

The Basohli paintings in "laughing colours" display a remarkable harmony of line and colour. They are distinctive in style and lyrical in quality. In fact they might well be called "poems in colour".

Basohli heralded the dawn of a glorious era of painting which was soon to flourish in the small principalities nestling among the western Himalayan foothills. Fascinating Schools of Painting soon sprang up in Kangra, Guler, Chamba, Jammu and Poonch.

Jammu witnessed an unprecedented efflorescence in the fields of art and culture in the time of Dogra dynasty founded by Gulab Singh. Not only were temples built by the score, they were embellished with priceless paintings and frescoes. The palace walls and the *serais* or inns meant for the pilgrims were also decorated as an aid to spiritual rejuvenation of their subjects. This explains the presence of many murals and paintings in the palaces at Jammu, Udhampur and Ramnagar and the *serais* (or *havelis*, as they were called) for the use of the visiting pilgrims at Mansar and Purmandal. One of the best paintings in the Ramnagar Palace depicted Rama leaving for the forest. It was mural of great delicacy and pathos and showed Dasaratha lying unconscious on the ground with the ladies in the balconies shedding tears.

Religious themes dominated the murals and paintings in the *serais* at Purmandal put up by Gulab Singh and his son, Ranbir and at Mansar by Gulab Singh's younger brother, the extremely handsome Suchet Singh who appears to have been a man of great taste. It was he who put up the paintings and murals at Ramnagar,

the headquarters of the principality of the same name which had been conferred on him as a fief by the Lion of Punjab. Two of the very well-done paintings in the balcony of his *serai* at Mansar represented Gulab Singh making obeisance to his Guru, Bawa Prem Dass, and the Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh riding a horse with five of his principal disciples with swords, walking along. The walls of the *gurdwara* inside Dera Baba Banda are also adorned with frescoes depicting the Sikh Gurus and scenes from Sri Krishna's life.

A large number of paintings of Basohli and other hill territories are housed in the Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu, which was opened in 1954 by independent India's first President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad.

The Gallery has a number of sections containing paintings, manuscripts, archaeological finds, etc., etc. The section on Pahari Paintings is the best and most interesting. It has on display paintings of Basohli, Chamba, Guler, Kangra, Jammu and Poonch, and other localities. Most of them are religious in theme and devotional in character.

A *Shiva Parvati* painting of Poonch shows Shiva riding his *Nandi* bull while his spouse is on her own favourite mount, the lion. It is a beautifully drawn picture. There is a similar extremely handsome *Shiva Parvati* panel at Purmandal but in that the heavenly couple is placed on the *Nandi* only. The divine couple is, however, engaged in a *tete-a-tete*, with Shiva looking back.

A remarkable Basohli painting of unknown authorship published in this book is of *Hara-Hara*. Similar paintings of *Ardhanarishvara* representing Shiva and Parvati as one are also known to exist. The Dogra Art Gallery contains a remarkable painting of Durga by the foremost Jammu artist Hari Chand of Ranbir Singh's time (his father hailed from Kangra). Her head dress is Kashmirian and her face instinct with divine power.

We have to be grateful to a Padhya family of Basohli for many of the masterpieces from that hallowed art centre. The Padhya Brahmans were the court physicians and they preserved these art treasures when the rulers who inspired them were no more. One of the the Padhyas, Kunj Lal by name, presented a set of over six dozen paintings to Dr. Karan Singh when some years ago he was the *Sadar-i-Riyasat* (Governor) of Jammu & Kashmir State. An

equally big set was presented to the then Chief Minister, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. These are now in the Dogra Art Gallery. They contained some *Rasamanjari* paintings. Dr. Karan Singh's set now adorns his palace. It contains, besides others, pictures depicting scenes of *Nala Damayanti*.

Religious themes still continue to inspire some of the artists in the province. Sansar Chand Badhoo, the best known among them, has a number of *dharmic* paintings to his credit. These include paintings on Mata Vaishno, Saraswati and *Dharthimata*. The last is a sensitive depiction of how the new-born child on 'mother earth' is assailed by *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *ahankar* and *andhkar* with *jnana* (represented by a venerable old man) nearby to save him. Similarly he graphically depicts Shakuntala's reaction on being rejected by Dushayanta and Brahma pursuing Usha.

DANCE

Religion has strongly influenced the other folk arts and literature. Among the folk dances of Jammu, the two most original—*dhaku* and *ghurai*—are devotional in character and religious in inspiration.

Dhaku and *ghurai* are both dances of Bhadrawah. The *dhaku* is performed on the occasion of local fairs called *Kud*; hence the dance is sometimes referred to—though incorrectly—as the *Kud*. It is not an individual's performance or even of a small group. A large number of men participate in the dance which is held at night and is witnessed by men and women both. The dance is held around a camp-fire. The participants dance in a circle with elaborate, rhythmical movements and well-planned steps forward and backward. Despite the large number of participants there is complete synchronisation in the movements of hands and feet. The musical instruments used are *dhol*, flute, bells and *narsinghas* (horns). The dance is performed in three stages—each to the accompaniment of a particular *tal*. The climax is reached in the third phase when the movements are accelerated and the dancers and spectators get into ecstasy.

It is said that *dhaku* dance was formerly performed by both men and women; but now only men participate in it. The women have their own dance called *ghurai*. The dance is so called because

it is performed to the accompaniment of a particular song, *ghurai* sung by the participants. According to another view the dance is so named after Gauri, Shiva's consort. No musical instruments are used. The dance is usually held as part of women's festival celebrated as thanksgiving for their continued marital status. Widows do not participate in it.

The women folk observe a fast on the day, and worship Gauri to invoke her blessings for their continued conjugal life. At night they assemble at some suitable place and dance. Clad in colourful dresses they dance in a circle. At the end of each round they clap their hands gently, bend down and touch the ground and dance again.

Bhangra dances are a special feature of Baisakhi celebrations but *bhangra* is an importation from the Punjab and is more secular than religious. But another dance which is devotional is performed by small children and youngsters on the occasion of *Lori* at the height of winter. Each party of *Lori* revellers, carrying its own *chhajja* is accompanied by drum beaters. The dance is performed to the accompaniment of the drums at different points on the route of their procession. The youngsters dance about and rhythmically strike the small sticks they are carrying in their hands, moving forward and turning around the while.

Religion has contributed to mass entertainment of the common people in the form of *Ras*. The *ras* is performed by professional troupes and the themes are drawn from the epics or other sacred texts. Though their dramatic standards are by no means high they are very popular. Villagers flock to witness the shows in their hundreds. Feminine roles are played by young boys.

Even more interesting and popular are the *Ram Lila* performances arranged locally by the people themselves during the *Assuj Navratras*.

MUSIC

Religion has made its contribution in the field of music also. Among the renowned Dogra singers who achieved an undying name for himself was the late Mastram whose *Karkan* and *baran* were listened to with avidity by people everywhere.

His tradition is ably kept alive by his younger brother Gopal Das and Ghulam Mohammad. Jammu artists in the musical field who have won all-India acclaim include Manmohan Pahari, hailing from a Basohli village, and Master Allaha Rakha, the renowned *tabla* player, who comes from Kathua. Another good singer of Jammu province belongs to Kishtwar. Named Ghulam Nabi Dholwal, he is poet, singer and musician rolled into one. He has a number of devotional poems to his credit. He sings in Kashmiri and Dogri, besides his native language.

Jammu has produced a number of good classical masters, including Pandit Uma Dutt. His son, Shiv Kumar has equalled the Kashmiri masters of *Santoor*, to which he has brought a new range of expressiveness. Shiv Kumar has travelled abroad extensively and given over three dozen concerts in Britain, Canada and the United States.

According to Shri Ghulam Mustafa "Ishrat Kashmiri", Kishtwar has the credit of having produced a work on music in the middle of the eight century A.D. Entitled *Sangeet Sanghrah* it is believed to have been composed by one Vik in the time of Raja Narendra Sen (746—751 AD). He says that Raja Maha Singh (1661—74 AD) was well versed in writing poetry in Sanskrit and Persian. Further light on Kishtwar's contribution in the field of sacred literature is expected to be thrown when the Sharada manuscripts believed to be in the custody of a Kishtwar astrologer, Pandit Dina Nath Jitshi are published.

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SACRED LITERATURE

Jammu is not very rich in so far as devotional literature is concerned. But though it has little to show comparable to the sculptural masterpieces of Babor or the miniatures of Basohli, yet it is by no means completely barren in this field. Its paucity in the literary field was largely due to the fact that the people's devotional impulse found expression in the hymns and verses of master poets in Sanskrit and Hindi. But in recent times Dogri and some of the local dialects have also been utilised for the purpose.

Basohli occupies a pride of place in this field also. Badhu, a village in Basohli Tehsil produced a prominent literary figure in the time of Raja Ranjit Singh Dev (1725—1782 AD). He was named Devi Ditta. Commonly known as Dattu, he wrote a number of very good poems in Hindi (*Braj Bhasha*). The best known of these are *Vir Vilas* (translation of a part of the *Mahabharata*), *Bara Mah*, and *Kamal Netra Stotra*, a devotional poem. Shiv Ram, his nephew wrote some verses including an invocation to goddess Gauri. Dattu's grandson, Trilochan translated a portion of the *Mahabharata* under the title *Neeti Vinod*.

A versified translation of the *Mahabharata* in *Bhadrawahi* has been attempted by Pt. Gauri Shanker. The *Bhadrawahi* dialect, which is descended from Sanskrit, is rich in devotional poetry. The best known devotional poet of *Bhadrawah* is Master Chuni Lal who passed away nearly half a dozen years ago. His invocation to Vasukinag is very popular and sung on the occasion of fairs and festivals. Thakur Gambhir Chand who may be called the 'Father of *Bhadrawahi* poetry' also wrote some spiritual verses.

Kishtwar's great saints have inspired a number of poems in Urdu and Persian. These have been published in the form of a booklet. Rasa Javidani, (his full name is Abdul Qudus Rasa Javidani), the greatest living poet of Jammu & Kashmir State who writes in both Urdu and Kashmiri, has been greatly influenced by the shrine of Asrar-i-Sharif. One of his Kashmiri stanzas translated into English, reads:

"Rasa has toured cities and villages,

But he can never forget Kishtwar,
Where he divined the secret of Shah Asrar.”

Another great poet of Bhadrawah, Jan Mohammad Tishna who writes in his native dialect has written a poem on Mela Patt. A venerable old scholar of Kishtwar, Khwaja Ghulam Rasool Kamgar, has translated into Kashmiri verse Iqbal's *Ramuz-i-Bekhudi*, besides other works. He is a master calligraphist.

As already stated, following Ranbir Singh's patronage of Sanskrit, Jammu emerged as a great centre of Sanskrit learning in the country. It has produced a number of great Pandits and scholars including Shri Shukdeva, Shri Kedar Nath Shastri and Shri Kaka Ram Shastri. Jammu University's present Head of the Sanskrit Department is a daughter of the soil. She is Dr. Ved Kumari Ghai, author of a scholarly book on the ancient Kashmir text, *Nilamatapurana*.

Vasuki is also believed to have had his own *Purana*, named *Vasuki-Purana*. It is, however, not available at present. Some of the shrines and streams have their *mahatmyas*. The Devika has its own. Tawi has a *Shatakam* (hundred verses), written by Shri Kedar Nath Shastri.

Dogri which is a very young language has developed its own corpus of sacred literature, comprising ballads and folk songs.

The ballads are mostly about various gods and shrines, but some are about the popular heroes and martyrs. Those about the valour and gallantry of the heroes are known as *Baran* while the ones about the nobility and sacrifice of the martyrs are called *Karkan*. The *kark* of Bawa Jitoo which relates the story of his martyrdom is very moving.

A notable contribution in the field of devotional poetry has been made by Dr. Karan Singh who has not only translated into English some Dogri songs but has himself written a number of devotional poems in the language and composed their music. Other Dogri writers who have written on religious subjects include Ram Dhan and Swami Brahmanand, both of them of Akhnoor. The latter passed away only about a decade ago while the former lived before him.

Another notable addition to sacred literature in Dogri is a translation of *Ramayana* by Pt. Shambunath. A cousin of the late Pt.

Hardatt Shastri, he is unrivalled in narrative verse. Other modern Dogri writers who have devotional poems to their credit, include Smt. Padma Sachdeva, the only Sahitya Academy award winner in the language. She has written *bhajans* on Shiva and Mata Vaishno Devi . The Devi shrine has inspired a full-length feature film also.

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He is One without a second, but the sages comprehend Him differently and call Him by different names.

The Veda.

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The lamps are different but the light is the same.

Maulana Rumi.

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PERMANENT PROTECTION

Some say the more children mean more hands to help in the farm or to increase the family income. But today, it is not so. More children in a family mean more mouths to feed, more clothes to wear—in fact more of all the necessities of life.

True, there is no greater joy than the birth of a child. But there is no greater sorrow than the suffering of children which results from the inability of the parents to provide adequately for them.

An average family today has limited resources. More the children, more the difficulties in providing them with the necessities of life.

Many safe, effective, easy and economical methods are now-a-days available to prevent pregnancy and for spacing of children. For those who have less than two or three children and still want to have one, but not too soon, there are many methods which can be used either by men or women without any difficulty. But, for those who already have two or three children and do not wish to have any more, either the husband or the wife can get permanent protection by undergoing an operation. The operation on the man is known as vasectomy and that on the women tubectomy.

WHERE ARE FACILITIES AVAILABLE

Men can get vasectomy done at any family welfare planning centre, clinic or hospital. For women, the operation can be done at any district hospital. Maternity homes also provide facilities for operation on women. Sometimes big camps are also organised, separately for men and women, whither they can go for sterilization. Mobile Units also provide sterilization services.

No fees are charged for the operation either from men or women. In fact, some out-of-pocket money to cover the expenses on conveyance, food etc. is given to those who accept the operation.

If you want to have more information about these and other methods for preventing pregnancy, you can visit any family welfare planning centre or consult any family planning worker.

OTHER METHODS

FOR MEN

- (i) Nirodh, (ii) Condom,
- (iii) Withdrawal

FOR WOMEN

- (i) Loop, (ii) Diaphragm,
- (iii) Foam Tablets, (iv) Cream, (v) Jelly.

FOR BOTH

- (i) ABSTINENCE, (ii) SAFE PERIOD

GO TO ANY CENTRE TODAY AND LEARN HOW YOU CAN HAVE CHILDREN ONLY WHEN YOU WANT THEM.

ISSUED BY:

State Family Planning Bureau
J & K, SRINAGAR.

CITY OF TEMPLES

JAMMU, the winter capital of the Jammu & Kashmir State, is a city of temples. There are dozens of them here. So numerous are they that you can go hardly a few hundred yards in any direction without coming across a temple. At places there are a number of them in close proximity to one another. The temple spires rising up into the sky give it a definite character and make of it a unique "City of Temples". These towering citadels of faith seem to symbolize the spiritual longings of its people. And as the city is situated on a slope, they are visible from long distances.

The origin of the city is shrouded in the dim corridors of the distant past. There is, however, a tradition according to which it was founded by a legendary ruler named Jambu Lochan. Jambu was descended from the scion of a ruling family of Ayodhya who, some centuries earlier, had established himself at Parole (Kathua) and whose progeny had gradually extended their sway to Jammu. Jambu succeeded his brother Bahu Lochan, who had his seat of Government on the Bahu hill opposite. He too wanted to found a capital of his own, as was perhaps the wont with the rulers of the time. One day while on a hunting spree in the jungle on the hill opposite, Jambu found a tiger and a goat drinking at the same pond. Surprised, he asked his ministers the meaning of such a strange occurrence. They told him that the place excelled in virtue and for that reason no living creature bore enmity against another. The Raja felt that this was the site he was in search of and built his new capital here and named it Jambupura.

Purani Mandi in the heart of the city is the spot where the tank was. The early Dogra rulers had their palace here. The Rughnath Mandir in the vicinity was, according to some writers, built by a *Rani* of Maharaja Ranbir Singh.

The city is beautifully situated on the slopes of a ridge and has the Tawi river flowing at its feet. Just across the river, on its right, rises the hillock crowned with Bahu Fort. This strategic fort which commands an extensive view may well be called the city's sentinel. There is a beautiful canal in the southwest which

has been brought from the Chenab at Akhnoor, 20 miles away. In the north it is bounded by an amphitheatre of hills culminating in the three conical peaks of the sacred *Trikuta* hill.

Jammu is situated at an altitude of about 1000 feet above sea level. In summer the temperature ranges from 23°C to about 40.°C and in the winter from 3.5°C to about 26.5°C.

Situated as it is on a ridge, the city has a natural drainage and despite deficiency of water it is reasonably clean.

Jammu is the second largest city in Kashmir State with a population of 155249, according to the 1971 Census. The population rises considerably in winter when the Kashmir Government Secretariat and other offices function from here.

In addition to the large number of temples, big and small, there are a number of mosques, gurdwaras and churches. The Maharaja's palace at its top in the north, overlooks the whole city. Just across, in idyllic surroundings, lies the new MOTEL built two years ago. Other noteworthy buildings in the city are the Old Palaces (now known as the Old Secretariat), the New Secretariat across the Parade Ground, with the Gandhi Bhavan and the Gulab Bhavan in close vicinity. The Regional Research Laboratory in the south-west and the Canal nearby add greatly to its beauty. But the most noteworthy feature of the city are its temples which lend it a peculiar grace and charm by day and night both. During daytime their tin and gilded spires glisten in the sun while at night the electric and neon lights give it the look of a star-studded skyscape. The temples usually had a tank near by to supply water, but with the coming of piped water supply most of these have been filled up.

The city has suffered a number of shocks in recent years. But it survived them. It witnessed a large influx of refugees following the partition of the country. Most of them have been absorbed. Being close to Pakistan it was put under heavy strain during 1965 and 1971 when Pakistan invaded our country and made a desperate but fruitless bid to capture Jammu or the roads leading to it. The city, however, stood these tests well and gave commendable support to our brave troops.

The city has vastly expanded in recent years and a number of new colonies have come up; the more prominent among them being Gandhi Nagar, Shastri Nagar, Nanakpura and Bakshi Nagar.

There are a number of cinema houses, some of them as good as any elsewhere in the country. The State Academy of Arts, Culture and Languages is putting up a big building which will be fitted up with a good theatre. The city has a University of its own, besides a number of colleges teaching various disciplines and faculties. There is a first-rate Hospital and an Ayurvedic College. A Medical College has also been put up.

New constructions have been coming up fast. The narrow, rough stone-paved streets and lanes, where, not to speak of any wheeled traffic, even pedestrians felt it unsafe to walk, have been replaced by *pucca* streets and roads. There has been an upsurge in economic and commercial activity.

Jammu is a cosmopolitan town where people from all parts of the country may be met with. There is a large proportion of *Kashmiris* and *Panjabis*. The principal languages spoken are Dogri, Panjabi, Kashmiri, Hindi, Urdu and English.

Jammu is one of those cities which were infested by monkeys. Though their number has grown considerably less, they are yet to be found in fair strength around the Old Secretariat buildings and temples. Large numbers of them are found in the Bahu Fort where the visiting devotees feed them with gram, sweets etc., They are bold and audacious.

Jammu city is the nerve-centre of the transport system in the State. Buses and cars converge on it from all over the State and outside—from Kashmir, Rajouri and Poonch, Kishtwar and Bhadrawah, Basohli and Kathua and from Pathankot, Amritsar, Jullundur, Chandigarh and Delhi. A good bus terminal with a cafeteria and some rooms and dormitories has been built recently. There is a Tourist Reception Centre which provides good accommodation in a very good part of the City. But the rates are rather high for average middle class families.

In fact the upward revision of rates in the Tourist Reception Centre from time to time has resulted in a general rise in the rents of the hotels some of which leave much to be desired in sanitation and service.

There are hardly any tongas in the city. But taxis and tempos are available in plenty. There is a passenger bus service too.

The Indian Airlines operate a daily Foker Friendship Service between Delhi and Srinagar, touching Chandigarh, Amritsar and

Jammu. A shuttle service also operates between Jammu and Srinagar some times. It takes but 35 minutes between the two capital cities of the State.

At the time of partition, the State was left without a proper road-link with the rest of India, as both its routes to that country were occupied by Pakistan. But a new road between Pathankot and Jammu was thrown open to traffic early in 1948. The road which was built in record time is one of the finest in the country. Regular bus services ply between Jammu and Pathankot and the time taken is usually two and a half hours.

Jammu is the only town in Jammu and Kashmir, which was on the railway map of undivided India. But the railway link with Sialkot was snapped when India was partitioned and large chunks of State territory were unlawfully occupied by Pakistan. But now a new railway link has been provided between Pathankot and Jammu at a cost of over 12 crores of rupees. The new railway line was thrown open to passenger traffic in December last year. Two railway trains from Delhi—the *Srinagar Express* and the *Kashmir Mail*—now run to Jammu; so does the *Sealdah Express* from Calcutta. Special trains are sometimes run to cope with the travellers rush.

The Jammu Railway Station is one of the best and most modern in the country. Situated at a height it commands a panoramic view on all sides. The foundation stone of a new Tourist Reception Centre near the Railway Station has just been laid. It is estimated to cost Rs 14 lakhs.

Jammu is the gateway to Kashmir Valley. Visitors to Kashmir have to pass through the city on their way to or back from Kashmir. They usually spend a day or two here for the city has so much to offer. The Rughnath temples, the Old Secretariat and the Dogra Art Gallery, housing the priceless paintings from Basohli, and Bahu Fort are well worth a visit. The city also offers much in the shape of dry fruits, forest products and delicious honey. Kashmir handicrafts and fruits are also available. Jammu is known for the excellence of its sweets, milk and milk products.

The people of Jammu are greatly devoted to the large number of temples and shrines in the city. They visit them in large numbers every morning. Temple bells start striking early. One is in fact awakened to the pealing of the bells and gongs when ones eyes open

at day-break. Many, including old ladies, go down to the Tawi for their ablutions in the morning. The city is rightly known as the KASHI or VARANASI of the North, as Maharaja Ranbir Singh intended it to be.

* * *

How senseless seems to me the man who has seen his neighbour ill and old and dead, and yet remains happy and is not shaken by fear.....

Ashvaghosa

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- (i) starting new industries and/or for renovation/modernisation of existing ones
- (ii) construction of hotels and houseboats; and
- (iii) purchase of vehicles i.e. Stage Carriages, public carriers, petrol tankers, etc.

A variety of schemes include grant of loans to technocrats and graduates. Foreign Exchange Loans, etc.

Financial assistance sanctioned and disbursed by the Corporation during 1973-74 covered

	(Rupees in lakhs)	
	<i>Sanctioned</i>	<i>Disbursed</i>
Industries	91.82	39.51
Transport	60.46	64.53
Hotels	20.53	2.93
Houseboats	4.18	3.00

Assistance to technocrats alone accounted for over 32% and 47% of the total sanctions and disbursements respectively to the Industries Sector. Assistance available on easy terms against economically and technically feasible schemes. For details please contact the Corporation's offices at Jammu and Srinagar.

JAMMU OFFICE
P.W.D. Buildings,
Opp. New Transport Yard,
Nehru Market, JAMMU
Phones: 8302, 8951.

SRINAGAR OFFICE
P.W.D. Buildings,
Residency Road, Srinagar
Phones: 3282, 5649.

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- (iv) A Kraft Paper Project at a cost of Rs. 35 crores.

J & K STATE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Is a special agency of the Government of Jammu and Kashmir for rapid industrialisation in the State:—

The Corporation has a number of Project Reports available for setting up of resource and consumer based industries, certified as technically feasible and economically viable by the Industrial Consultants and are looking forward for interested entrepreneurs to take up these either on their own or as Joint Venture with the Corporation.

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- (i) Machinery to the entrepreneurs on hire purchase basis;
 - (ii) Scarce, controlled and imported raw material at reasonable rates.
- For the development of Handicrafts the Corporation advances material and money on loan to small loom holders for weaving of fine quality carpets for export through HHEC.

The Corporation has on its own established two most Modern Rice Mills in Kashmir. It has taken up setting up of a Cigarette Factory with a production capacity of 4500 million cigarettes per annum in collaboration with M/s Golden Tobacco Company.

In deference to the wishes of a number of esteemed friends, it has been decided to publish a similar book about Kashmir. The preparation of the book entitled "KASHMIR: SHRINES & PILGRIMAGES" is well in hand. Information relevant to the subject will therefore be gratefully received and considered for inclusion in the book.

Readers who feel they have some worthwhile additional information on the shrines & pilgrimages in Jammu are also requested to send it. This would be considered for inclusion in the next edition of the book.

BUDDHISM IN KASHMIR & LADAKH

by

J.N. GANHAR AND P.N. GANHAR

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Hindu, Madras.